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ABSTRACT

This monograph describes 12 urban middle schools in 5 school systems as they work to apply the characteristics of successful communities to education. In some of these schools, racial segregation has been and continues to be a major feature. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation (New York) has awarded grants of $400,000 each to school systems in: (1) Baltimore (Maryland); (2) Louisville (Kentucky); (3) Milwaukee (Wisconsin); (4) Oakland (California); and (5) San Diego (California). Schools were selected because of their readiness to embrace middle school reform. This report represents an independent observer's view of the progress and problems of the reform effort in these ongoing projects. Project descriptions include profiles of the individual schools, administrators, and teachers who are making reform work. A look at these schools confirms that each school's effort is unique, but that making the school child-centered is essential. Many students in these schools responded to the higher expectations, content, and support generated by the initiatives. Central offices developed new ways of working with schools as the programs progressed and some schools began to offer leadership to others in their systems. Schools and communities learned to work together to benefit students. A better future for these urban students depends on the will to change by each school and within each teacher. Included are a 40-item bibliography and a 36-item list of resource organizations. (SLD)

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GAINING GROUND

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By Anne C. Lewis

Foreword by Deborah M. McGriff

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AINING GROUND

The Highs and Lows of Urban Middle School Reform 1989-1991

By Anne C. Lewis

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By Deborah M. McGriff

General Superintendent

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Today's middle schools are caught between maintaining traditional educational practices and embracing innovations to prepare youth for the constantly changing environment of the 1990s and the 21st Century. If these youth are to become productive, self-sufficient adults, urban middle schools must change dramatically. Yet many still cling to policies and practices that contradict the needs of urban youth. Most inner-city middle schools are large, impersonal, impoverished organizations that do not put the needs of youth first. Old poli-

F O R E W O R D

cies and practices die hard, but the educators you will read about in this book are helping them die because they know conventional wisdom does not serve youth well.

These educators have learned that if middle school youth are to be successful, cities must become communities for youth. Such a community embraces change, nurtures diversity, expects responsibility to and from the community, and fosters collaboration. The City of Detroit initiated its City for Youth campaign in the fall of 1991, which will bring schools and communities together to save our youth. Neither can do it alone.

In their struggle for reform, the school systems in this book are learning to embrace change with creativity and flexibility. They realize that the challenge is not limited to "moving around the same old furniture within the house of poverty." They know that urban middle schools must be transformed by altering values, as well as by changing fundamental policies and practices.

Some of these 12 middle schools experience an incredible mix of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. In others, racial segregation has been and continues to be a major feature. We as administrators must encourage schools and communities to accommodate these individual differences, while at the same time creating group bonding and cooperation. Society in the 21st Century will need citizens who respect diversity. Thus multicultural curriculum and second-language learning should permeate every urban middle school.

Classroom policies and practices must also be compatible with the physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of young adolescents. Youth today are experiencing adolescence up to five years earlier than in the past. Rapid growth and maturation require school and classroom organizations that accommodate the total development of youth. A successful urban middle school values healthy physical development as much as it values emotional stability, social harmony, and intellectual challenge. High content does not overshadow high support and high expectations. Creating synergy among these competing demands is probably the major challenge facing urban middle schools.

The five school systems described in this book are working to apply the characteristics of successful communities to education. They are exploring new ways to create synergy among the constellation of changing values, policies, and practices. They are developing the means to reach out to parents and to the larger community to create a web of inclusion. Some are even examining controversial innovations such as single gender schools to respond to past disproportionality in student performance and opportunity.

Have they discovered the panacea? Of course not. But they have made a commitment to the most powerful change possible. They are building communities for youth.

By M. Hayes Mizell, Director

Program for Disadvantaged Youth

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

The litany of statistics documenting the needs of urban adolescents speaks volumes about the urgency of strengthening inner-city, public schools. Yet in most cities these institutions are crippled by a lack of vision and leadership, misplaced priorities, and ineffective but entrenched practices. One longs to begin again, to start over, unencumbered by the dirty realities of schools as they are.

Such initiatives to create new schools from the ground up may help shape the future, but

INTRODUCTION

in the near term they are unlikely to touch the educational lives of our cities' 2.5 million young adolescents. In response to the immediate crisis, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation launched an ambitious partnership with five urban school systems in 1989. The goal is to provide disadvantaged students in grades six through nine with what we call an education of "high expectations, high content, and high support." To assist this whole-school reform, the Foundation awarded five, two-year grants of $400,000 each to the school systems in Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland, and San Diego. The overall initiative, a $12 million effort, is expected to last five years.

The Foundation selected these particular school systems because of persuasive evidence that they wanted to embrace middle school reform. In most cases, it was a segment of the school systems' leadership, rather than the strengths of the schools or communities, that attracted us. We wanted to support dedicated and determined people who believed they could use their partnership with the Foundation to create more challenging and supportive schools for urban adolescents.

Project leaders began with schools as they found them. In many cases, the schools were seriously deficient in their capacities to mount comprehensive reform. Nonetheless, we chose to support their efforts because students in urban school systems do not need any more excuses for why reform can't take place in their schools; they need people who are willing to risk change in spite of the difficulties.

The Foundation's experience to date has been instructive and sobering. At the same time, it has validated our belief that there are courageous and committed people whose efforts to reform their schools merit the Foundation's support. Our support will continue for several more years. In the interim, we are documenting the schools' progress and evaluating the results. Definitive information about outcomes will not be available until 1995, but the first two years are already full of lessons that can be useful to others striving for reform.

We asked Anne Lewis, the respected education journalist who in 1990 wrote *Making It in the Middle: The How and Why of Excellent Urban Schools for Young Adolescents*, to visit the five cities and their 12 project schools and prepare a report based on what she saw and heard. Our goal was to produce a balanced report, reflecting an independent observer's view of both progress and problems. Ms. Lewis has captured the drama, the struggles, and the promises that characterize the schools and school systems in the Foundation's middle grades initiative. While her analysis and conclusions are her own, they generally confirm those of Foundation staff and other outside observers.

We hope this report will inspire others to support urban middle school reform and will guide them in their planning.

he paradoxes

facing a dozen urban middle-grades schools as they

begin a difficult process of change. . .

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"Some of my friends are around drugs and things," admits an eighth-grader attending a troubled Oakland, California, junior high school, but she adds wistfully, "they still want to be better than what they see around them. They want to write poetry...."

Urban middle-grades schools should be full of poets because they are special places, brimming with pathos, problems, and potential. In many ways, they are defining what American society will become. Can the tremendous mix of cultures, languages, abilities, and

PAINTING THE PICTURE

aspirations found among the young adolescents of the nation's cities move toward competence and responsibility? Or will the choices these young students make during the crucial middle-school years put severe limits on their lives and society in general?

The oft-repeated statistics about the concentration of racial/ethnic diversity and poverty in cities need no great elaboration. Three-fourths of African-Americans now live in urban areas; recent immigrants, the most culturally diverse in history, have settled primarily in major cities, turning them into miniature global villages. For at least the next 20 years, demographers say, the minority population will continue to increase, climbing to four of every 10 school-age children early in the next century. Enrollments in major cities, of which 2.5 million are in grades 6-8, are already far beyond 40 percent.

These youngsters are all too often affected by concentrated poverty surrounding them, bringing that burden to their schools – packing it with anger, hopelessness, family illiteracy, and unreal perceptions of what is normal. Coupled with the frenetic energy that characterizes most youngsters this age, their problems make urban early adolescents tough to teach. As places to work, urban middle schools can wear you out.

So how can such schools be special?

One reason is they challenge the present. In every profession, people are running to catch up with the rapid increase in knowledge about their work or to adapt to new demands. The long-predicted "lifetime learning" syndrome is here. Opportunities abound in urban middle grades to use new knowledge, grow professionally, and shape schools to the needs of children who are making life-determining choices as they pass through them. It is in these grades that the issue of tracking by ability is being addressed forcefully. These are the years when youngsters begin to piece information together into a whole and to think abstractly, and urban middle schools are using this knowledge of adolescent development to bring about multiple perspectives in the curriculum. Middle grades are the last, best hope of preparing youth for high-content mathematics and science; this is why so many research and program efforts in these subjects focus on the middle grades. These schools also are redefining their relationships with families and communities in order to help students succeed.

Urban middle schools, however, are special mostly because they are so important in the lives of their students. Not without violence themselves, the schools are often far safer than the streets around them, safer sometimes than the homes children come from and return to. Poor, urban students may enter the middle grades lacking academic skills, but they still have hope. When they leave the middle grades for high school, they either have the academic skills,

the personal goals, and the self-esteem to select positive options – or they lose out and drop out. These are the years when they give in to failure or they learn to write poetry.

INVESTING IN CHANGE

Despite grand rhetoric, few urban middle schools with large percentages of poor and/or minority children could be described as successful. Here and there exemplary turnaround schools receive recognition, but even these exhibit what Stanford University professor Larry Cuban terms first-order changes. Such changes make what already exists more efficient, he explains, "without substantially altering the ways in which adults and children perform their roles."

How can urban middle schools go beyond this to begin changes that fundamentally alter structures rather than reinforce traditional ones? Can urban bureaucracies be persuaded to provide support for change rather than inhibit it? Can entrenched professional habits of teachers give way to new knowledge and new will? Can community support and urban schools change in tandem? Can isolated successes with students become the norm for a whole middle school, for all middle schools in a district?

The Program for Disadvantaged Youth of The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation is seeking answers to such questions. Its investment in five urban school systems – Baltimore, Louisville, Milwaukee, Oakland and San Diego – focuses on developing and delivering an education of "high expectations, high content, and high support" for disadvantaged youth in middle grades. Two or three schools in each of the school districts – a total of 12 schools – are participating in the project which, as one principal expresses it, "gives me permission to change."

This report is about the difficult beginnings of a process to change these schools. There is good news and bad news here. It is far too early – only two years into a five-year experiment – to make judgments about the achievements, but the experiences of the schools in taking the first steps toward reform are rich in lessons and insights for urban middle schools everywhere.

The story of these schools would be much less interesting if they were following a "model" for change. Instead, they are doing what all schools must eventually do – finding their way to greater success through a sometimes painful process that consists primarily of changing attitudes held by students, teachers, parents, and administrators. The Foundation's premise is that outside support might best bring about lasting improvements in the lives of young adolescents if it sets specific goals, monitors efforts closely and shares the information with schools, and provides the means for new ideas and collaboration to flourish – but encourages each school and district to use the resources as they see fit.

• Like smoke signals in a very different culture, walkie-talkies bind people together in urban middle schools. Principals may not want to carry around this ubiquitous piece of urban school technology, but staff often get nervous if they are out of contact with those who can make quick decisions. Office secretaries, more than anyone else in a school, must know who to send when a substitute teacher makes a

frantic call to the office for help, or how to handle a message that outsiders are gathering on the school grounds. A teacher watches two students punching each other down the hallway. Could this be friendly play or the start of a rumble? Better call the office about it. Colorful T-shirts and funny hats – just springtime fads or signs of a gang? Beep the office about them, just in case.

Middle-school technology includes the ubiquitous walkie-talkies.

• Front doors sometimes disappear in urban middle schools, bolted shut or obscured by chainlink fences. The faculty decides buses should come up a back alley to a side door where monitors can better protect students from attacks by gangs.

• A young girl puts her head on a desk. Is this boredom? Drugs? A sleepless night while parents argued or gunfire shattered the dark? Or perhaps the child had no home to go to, the teacher tells a visitor.

• A career education teacher directs a field trip through a wealthy neighborhood, only a mile or so from school but an alien world for his students, some of whom may never have been beyond the confines of a few poverty-stricken blocks. A trivial idea or a determined attempt to get them to think about other possibilities for themselves?

• A teacher willingly stays long after school is out to help students selected for an algebra class, but few come. Disinterest? No, the teacher explains. Parents decide their children should not walk home alone – many youngsters in the neighborhood have been attacked by gangs.

In 1988-89 a number of school systems across the country developed proposals to compete for participation in the project. Five of them received a two-year, $400,000 grant, the first step of a potential five-year participation in the project. The Foundation also provides local and national resources in what is expected to be a $12 million overall initiative. Locally, grants include support for groups encouraging greater parent involvement and enriched curriculum experiences. Nationally, the Foundation provides technical assistance to the schools, curriculum and staff development resources across many subject-matter disciplines, and student support initiatives – a cornucopia of ideas to select from. Finally, the schools and districts participate in documenting their progress on the Foundation's goals.

The three "highs" of the project – high expectations, high content, and high support – provide a vision. Without further definition, however, they leave educators in limbo. Therefore, the Foundation elaborates on them in four broad objectives. Each of the five school systems committed themselves to ensuring that students, between the time they leave grade five and enter grade 10, will:

- complete the middle grades curriculum on time;
- exhibit mastery of higher-order reasoning, thinking, and comprehensive skills;
- exhibit improved self-esteem, self-efficacy,

and attitudes toward school and schoolwork as a result of regularly engaging in supportive interactions with adults; and

• understand how different curricula can affect their career and/or post-secondary education options and select programs of study that will enable them to pursue their choices.

These objectives brought the 12 schools together with a common mission, but each began and proceeded differently to reach the objectives. Two schools are in neighborhoods as pleasant and safe as the best of suburbs (one is in the wealthiest enclave of the city), the rest are true inner-city schools. Some are new to middle school organization and concepts, some were organized around the needs of young adolescents years ago. Some chose their faculty specifically for this age group, some struggle with a difficult mixture of certification and teachers' abilities. Some provide a positive climate for teachers and students, some have lost control to an amorphous student culture.

All, however, need help in order to be successful with disadvantaged students. As a Louisville, Kentucky, district administrator succinctly described his schools: "If we can do it in these schools, we can hold them up to others and say, 'You can do it too.' There are no places worse."

The most spontaneous voices on school reform – illustrating both the hope and the need for change – come from the students in two very different areas of San Diego. Students at Horace Mann and Muirlands Middle Schools were given an assignment to write each other about their schools and communities. The following quotes are excerped from their letters.

STUDENTS SPEAK OUT

"I guess we're supposed to talk about our schools. That sounds kind of corny, huh!... The school is separated into houses by grade level. The 6th grade is at the west end of the campus. The 8th grade is at the east and, well, the 7th grade is stuck in the middle." – Muirlands

"I like most of my teachers because they are polite and never give up on us. That helps with your self-esteem. I was born in Belize. It is located by Mexico in Central America. I speak Creole. Creole is a mixture of English, French and Spanish. I moved to live in America a year ago." – Horace Mann

"At the beginning of the year we studied Egypt. In social studies we made an Egyptian tomb, in science we learned how to carbon date Egyptian artifacts, and in math we learned how to count in Egyptian." – Muirlands

"Now I'm supposed to tell you about my school and the area. Well their's not too much to tell living in the ghetto. The school is alright I guess. We have our problems with gangs and crime just like any where else. The area as I said is in the ghetto, the streets are bumpy, lights burned out and crack-heads die with a pipe in their mouth. My classes are pretty stupid and boring. Generally my teachers try to make the class as much fun as possible, even if they have to yell at certain students. In my class, my teacher has projects for the class. This makes class a lot more stimulating than just reading from the Science book." – Horace Mann

"We have a wheel class. It is four classes all combined into nine weeks. My last class was marine biology. We got to dissect a squid. Oh, fun!! I'm over that and into Meology. That is the study of yourself. Last week we had a Social Health class... or you could say we learned about our reproductive system. We couldn't laugh or we would have to leave." – Muirlands

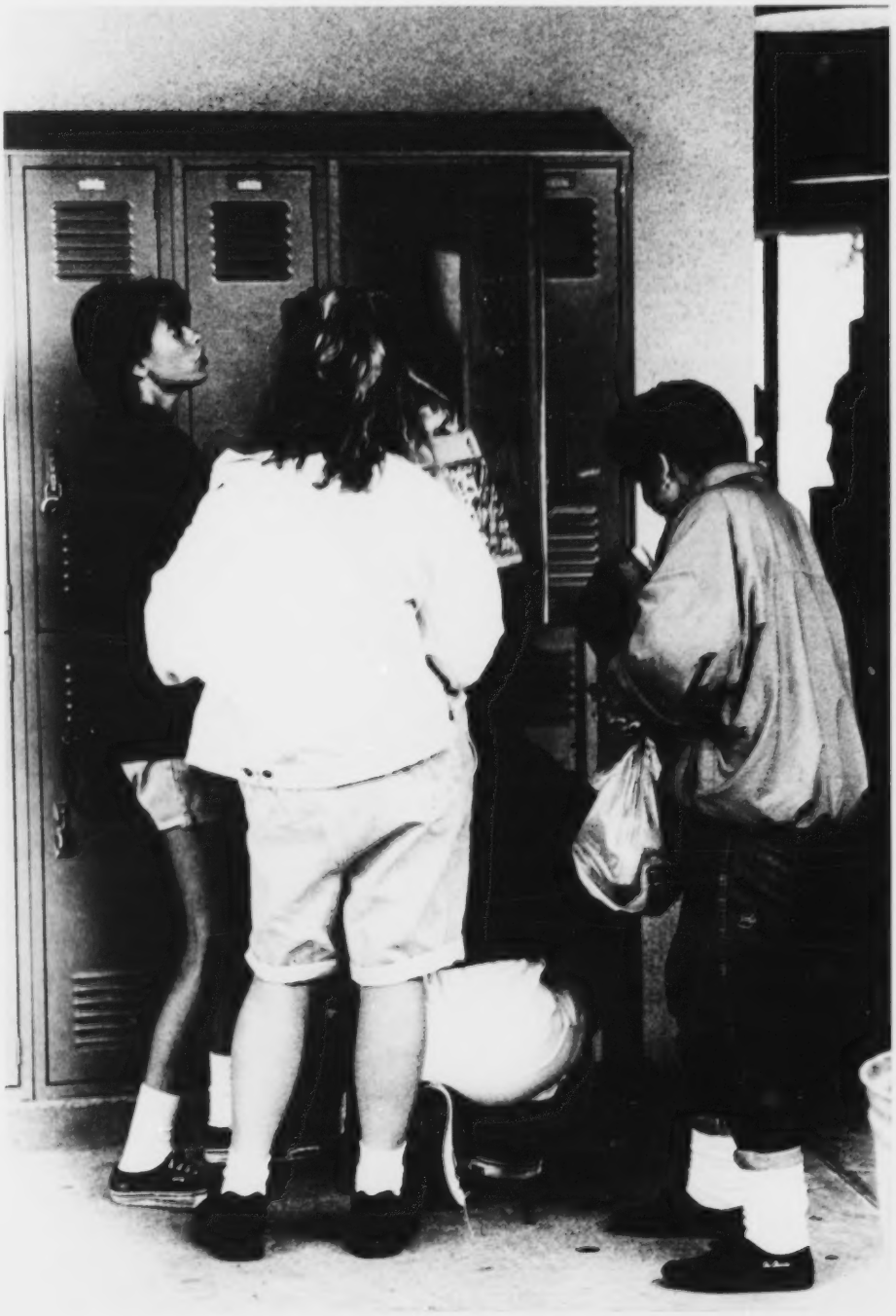
"My school is sort of run-down. The paint is old and beginning to flake and chip. The rules are really dumb and a lot of them do not make any sense. We can't wear hats because the school is paranoid about the gang problem." – Horace Mann

"Esta escuela es la mejor. Yo pienso eso porque aqui hasemos muchas cosas muy interesantes como tenemos un monton de clubs. En el que yo estoy son A.S.B. y Hispanic Leadership Club." – Muirlands

"Most of my teachers are ok but at times they're plain flatout *boring*. Some ways

they make school fun are we have contests, games and all other sorts of stuff. It's really exciting (Ya Right).... My hobbies are collecting baseball cards, playing sports (all kinds), and last but not least talking with girls." – Horace Mann

"When I'm here I feel that someone is always there for me and it gives me a good feeling." – Muirlands



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ifferent places,

different situations, but a common challenge. . .

Tourists enjoying the harbor sights at Baltimore or San Diego would find it hard to imagine the abject poverty of young people only a few city blocks away. Similarly, the bustling new skylines and high-tech belts of Louisville and Milwaukee cover up decades of intergenerational white and African-American poverty in the former, and an economy that has left poorly educated minorities far behind in the latter. Oakland exists side-by-side with famed and prosperous Berkeley and across the bay from San Francisco, the city which

FILLING IN THE DETAILS

enchants millions of visitors every year.

Within these communities are children and schools which, quite literally, are so isolated as to have been blotted out from public memory. A two-tiered society, so often predicted if this country cannot spread economic prosperity more evenly, is strongly entrenched in all of the project's five cities. The families served by the Clark schools know full well what it means to be on the bottom tier. The descriptions that follow reflect their lives. Some of the facts may seem daunting, but in each district there are possibilities for improving the chances of these students.

BALTIMORE

Maryland's largest and only urban center prides itself as "The City That Reads." Yet Baltimore has a much lower academic achievement and college-going rate than its neighboring counties. Baltimore is largely poor and African-American; about two-thirds of its residents live below the poverty level. The city has the highest tax rate in the state, but cannot match the spending per pupil of most other counties. The city's teenage pregnancy rate is among the highest in the country. A year before the Clark project began, 41 percent of Baltimore's middle-grade students scored below the 40th percentile in reading on nationally standardized tests; 32 percent of the students had been retained, 11 percent were two or more grades behind. "We need the best teachers we have and the smallest classes for our poorest schools," says Willie Foster, director of middle schools. Instead, she notes, the neediest schools too often get the less able teachers.

Baltimore found out what it was like to cope with leadership problems at the top. As the project got underway, conflict between the school board and the superintendent seeped down to classrooms; momentum for change stopped. In a 14-month period, the Clark project dealt with four different liaisons assigned by the central office to work with the schools; the superintendent resigned and one principal was replaced; few who wrote the original proposal for the project remained at their schools; teachers and administrators were more worried about a $15 million budget cut and hiring freeze than about reform.

At **Calverton Middle School**, principal Frances Ellington remembers exactly when the red brick, flat-roofed school was under construction. It was 1962, and she looked out upon the site from the maternity floor of a hospital nearby where her daughter had just been born. Like Ellington, many of the Calverton teachers are native to Baltimore, middle-class blacks who grew up in the city's West side. They teach in a school where 100 percent of the 1,300 students are black, but adults and students struggle to meld two very different worlds in their hours together.

The houses adjacent to the school are

Rising above the odds, Calverton math teacher Patrick Reed tackles algebra with a seventh grader.

pleasant, with real porches instead of Baltimore's traditional white stoops. The streets beyond, however, are mean to Calverton's students, who must walk to school. An after-school study center is open two days a week, but its teachers rarely see any students. Patrick Reed, a well-liked and dedicated math teacher who stays several hours past the end of the school day, explains: "Their parents won't let them walk home alone."

Most of Calverton's students live in families at or below the poverty line. "These children don't get any desserts," Walter

Hairston, assistant principal, says figuratively. He had just faced the dilemma of disciplining a youngster who was acting out. With the gas turned off in their apartment, the student's mother hunted every night for a different place to cook his dinner. Because funds are needed for social services for students, administrators had to cut out some non-academic programs, such as shop, that Hairston believes made school worthwhile for some students. "They already are denied so much," he says ruefully.

Calverton's teachers know they are teaching children whose lives are far different from their own. Yet many teachers cling to very traditional teaching and authoritarian styles to maintain order. It is all they know to do, even though they are losing the fight for children's minds. In the year before the Clark initiative, students who were considered learning disabled represented almost one-third of the eighth grade. The school's overall attendance rate was 75 percent; thirteen percent of the students were repeating a grade. Students' attitudes toward school worked against teachers' goals – some students earning awards would not even go up to receive them at the school assemblies.

At **West Baltimore Middle School**, teachers are also aware of a changing student body. Twenty years ago students came to school, "put their feet together and their hands on their desks and did what they were told," remarks Marjorie Bush, community and parent outreach coordinator at the school. Over the years, teacher selection at West Baltimore favored those comfortable with the student-centered philosophy of middle schools. Despite a faculty considerably older than in most schools, West Baltimore is open to experimentation and efforts in order to meet the needs of the "new" student.

West Baltimore has some advantages. The neighborhood is comparatively safe. It has more youngsters from middle-class families than many of the other Clark schools, although 60% are eligible for free/reduced price meals. Organized as a middle school (grades six through eight) in the mid-1970s, its 1,700 students are divided into four houses and 10 teams to provide smaller structures for students. Eighty percent of them are bused in from different neighborhoods. Principal Sheila Kolman was a middle-school principal at another site and served a year's internship in the central office. This experience gives her leverage amidst the district's instability. She is not afraid to stamp her imprint on the school.

West Baltimore is not all success, however. As the Clark project began, its attendance rate was 83 percent. Increased enrollments and an influx of students from closed schools in poorer neighborhoods threatened the capacities of the already-crowded school. Higher salaries in surrounding counties contribute to the loss of up to one-fifth of the teachers every year.

LOUISVILLE

Asked to name a desegregated school system that "works," experts inevitably cite Louisville/Jefferson County. Led by a determined business community in the mid-1970s, a relatively calm, well-organized desegregation process prevented overt white flight; stability since then has supported the reform efforts of Superintendent Donald Ingwerson. Among these was a standardization of grade arrangement in which eight patterns were reduced to three uniform ones, including 23 middle schools for grades six through eight. Staff development became a priority, and the district's Gheens Academy has been a model of teacher-directed professional improvement. Thirty percent of the high schools are part of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a reform effort led by Theodore Sizer of Brown University. The school system's links with university resources and with business leadership have earned it a national reputation. The district welcomes innovation.

Still, Louisville contains two worlds – that of an economically progressive community and that of lingering Appalachian white and southern black poverty. Forty-two percent of the students are economically disadvantaged; one-third are racial minorities. Families tend to stay in the district – their children will be the county's future work force – but move about a lot. Sixteen percent of the district's middle-grades students change schools each year.

The three schools chosen to participate in the Clark initiative were "untouched and uninvolved" by the economic rebirth going on in other parts of the city. The students live in what one study termed "high-stress" zones, areas where poverty and illiteracy abet low academic performance, high drop-out rates, high suspensions, and retentions. These are long-time problems in the three schools and are so pervasive, according to a district official, that "the staff, like the students, had begun to doubt their ability to make a significant difference." To highlight the need for change, Louisville added two additional "highs" – high involvement and high energy – to the Clark project's theme of high expectations, high content, and high support.

By most simple measures, **Iroquois Middle School** was doing the right things. It is clean and orderly. It started a Catch-Up Crew in the mid-1980s to help over-age students. There are no bells. Honors math classes actually cover some algebra. Before Iroquois became a Clark school, a few teachers were trying out team teaching. Its stable, very experienced teaching staff seemed to be sincerely working to meet the needs of their 700 students, predominantly white and increasingly poor. About two-thirds received free or reduced-price lunches.

But Iroquois also seemed stuck. According to district surveys, teachers and students

THE BASICS

District	Number Of Students	Ethnicity		Percent Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Lunch
BALTIMORE				
Calverton	1300	100 %	Black	74 %
West Baltimore	1700	80 %	Black	60 %
		20 %	White	
LOUISVILLE				
Iroquois	750	32 %	Black	72 %
		68 %	White	
Southern	700	39 %	Black	79 %
		61 %	White	
Western	800	38 %	Black	93 %
		62 %	White	
MILWAUKEE				
Kosciuszko	762	4 %	American Indian	92 %
		3 %	Asian	
		4 %	Black	
		66 %	Hispanic	
		22 %	White	
		1 %	Other	
Parkman	520	99 %	Black	90 %
		1%	Other	
OAKLAND				
Frick	700	2 %	Asian	Not Available
		92 %	Black	
		5 %	Hispanic	
		1 %	White	
King Estates	785	2.3 %	Asian	Not Available
		89.8 %	Black	
		4.5 %	Hispanic	
		3.4 %	White	
Roosevelt	850	40 %	Asian	Not Available
		29 %	Black	
		29 %	Hispanic	
		2 %	White	
SAN DIEGO				
Mann	1615	26 %	Asian	72 %
		23 %	Black	
		26 %	Hispanic	
		20 %	White	
Muirlands	1000	2 %	Black	24 %
		33 %	Hispanic	
		59 %	White	
		6 %	Other	

These statistics are based on 1991 reports from the schools. Oakland had no figures on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, but reported census figures that showed 75% of Frick students eligible for welfare benefits, 19% of King Estates students, and 64% of Roosevelt students. Students from families making up to 185% of the poverty level are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Louisville contains a substantial amount of lingering Appalachian white poverty.

see things differently. For example, only 29 percent of the staff believed students cared about learning, yet 46 percent of the students said they did. Two-thirds of the teachers believed rules were enforced fairly, but only one-half of the students agreed. For a middle school, suspension rates were high, increasing every year to a 13.4 percent rate at eighth grade in 1988-89. Percentile rankings of students on Kentucky's reading tests improved from sixth to eighth grades; still, 40 percent left Iroquois for high school ranking under the 50th percentile.

There seemed to be a mismatch at Iroquois – a very traditionally oriented staff and a student body growing less traditional all the time. "I had fallen into a rut," admits Bob Zachery, principal at Iroquois from 1982 until he requested a transfer in 1991. "I fought change like everyone else, but the school became part of the Clark project, and I had no choice." For years, Zachery's leadership had been somewhat autocratic: "I thought I had to make all the decisions and teachers wanted it that way." Similarly, Iroquois' parents were acquiescent, either satisfied with the school's performance or apathetic toward it. "The parents' experiences with school were not good, yet most of them still made it into jobs, so they won-

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der why school is so important," Zachery explains. It is not uncommon for a student to have a parent in jail. With Churchill Downs just a few blocks from the school, some students are pressured by their families to quit school early and try for the life of a jockey.

Carol Miller's 13 years as a teacher at **Southern Middle School** seem like constant catch-up to her: "Every year the kids change, and we keep trying different things, hoping something works." The "we" changes often, too. In 1988-89, only 16 of the 51 teachers at Southern had been at the school longer than six years. Turnover among the 700 students also is high; one-third of those who enroll at the beginning of the school year are not there at the end. Children from the housing projects, principal Skip Clemons observes, tend to move about every three months. A 1988-89 district survey found Southern in a rut. Teachers, students, and parents were not particularly pleased with the school's efforts. Less than one-half of the students believed teachers had high expectations for them, and only 30 percent of the teachers felt students cared about learning. One-third of the parents believed teachers did not like their child.

Louisville's expanding downtown skyline begins not far from **Western Middle School**. The school's students and families, however, hardly notice that high-tech is taking over. Built in 1927, Western is a landmark in a largely working-class community along the Ohio River. Grandparents of today's students once sat in the same classrooms – Appalachian poor just as isolated from the city's mainstream then as the population is now. The only difference is that about one-third of the current student body of more than 800 is now African-American. The school's students are overwhelmingly poor – 93 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Because of its high number of children in poverty, it qualifies as a schoolwide Chapter 1 site, which gives it flexibility in developing programs that can include all students, rather than creating special programs for only some students with federal funds.

Western's staff is younger than that of the other two project schools in the district – and more open to change. Surveys in 1988-89 showed teachers were much less satisfied with the school's program than either students or parents. Ron Barber, a seasoned administrator with a flair for supporting staff willing to innovate, took over as principal when the Clark project began. Observers consider the staff "warm" and centered on students rather than on subjects, even though most of the teachers hold secondary certificates.

Students come to school – attendance averages about 91 percent – but they don't perform well. On the Kentucky minimal competency reading test in 1988-89, for example, 65 percent of Western's eighth graders ranked in the lower 50th percentile;

only 12 percent left with a reading level that put them in the top quartile. Parent involvement was the lowest of the three Clark initiative schools – only about 20 percent showed up at school for any reason.

MILWAUKEE

Milwaukee is a "proud workhorse of a city," according to *The New York Times*, pulling itself out of a serious slump by modernizing manufacturing and moving into service industries. But the strategy "has devastated the city's poor black neighborhoods, whose residents thrived in the high-wage union jobs of the city's manufacturing heyday and are now adrift on a rising tide of unemployment and despair."

Nowhere does that despair hit harder than in the two schools selected for the Clark initiative, one now all-black and the other a center for the city's growing Hispanic community. These populations fare miserably in high school – only 33 percent of African-Americans graduate within four years; only 32 percent of Hispanics. The schools generally reflect changes in the city's makeup and economics. About 70 percent of all students in Milwaukee are minorities; 57 percent of the middle school students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Only 28 percent of African-American middle-school students and 34 percent of Hispanics were at or above the national average in reading in 1988-89.

Kosciuszko Middle School, an aging red-brick building on a small hilltop in southwest Milwaukee, knows change. Through the years it served different waves of immigrants into Milwaukee's blue-collar working class. As a bilingual center, two-thirds of its students are Hispanic, one-fourth white, and the rest Asian, African-American, and Native American. More than two-thirds live in poverty.

Buses bring students up a back alley to drop them off at a side door because the staff can better protect students there. Several months after a neighborhood gang surrounded a school bus, students still showed fear in their eyes when talking about the incident. Faculty are constantly on the alert for gang activity, uneasily evaluating whether the Bart Simpson haircuts, beanie

Left: Kosciuszko has served a wave of immigrants over the years. Today its student body is two-thirds Hispanic.
Below: Parkman provides a haven from a violent Milwaukee neighborhood.

hats or overalls with a shoulder unbuttoned are just teen-age fads or signs for gangs.

Known affectionately as "Kozy," the school has teachers who are experienced and like where they are – 39 of the 63 teachers have been there at least five years. Not surprisingly, they did not take well to a new principal, appointed in 1989 as the Clark project began, who wanted to change the power structure in the school.

With just over 700 students, Kozy may be a pleasant environment for teachers and students, but it was not a successful one. Attendance had been dropping in the years before the Clark initiative – it was down to 83.3 percent in 1987-88. Only 4 percent of Kozy's seventh graders ranked in the top quartile on standardized reading tests; 79 percent ranked in the bottom half on math.

In the past, **Parkman Middle School** seemed more like a loose confederation of classrooms than a school. Meetings and planning took place, but follow-through seldom occurred. Meanwhile, Parkman's all-black student body drifted. At least one-fourth of the 400 students enrolled at the beginning of the year were gone by the end. Before the Clark project began, 40 percent of the students were being suspended every year, 24 percent were not promoted to the next grade; attendance was less than 84 percent. On standardized tests, about 80 percent of the students were below the 50th percentile in reading and math. A Greater Milwaukee Education Trust study discovered that of the 1986 Parkman graduates going on to Milwaukee's high schools, only 28 percent graduated, and their cumulative grade-point average was 1.78.

Parkman is a neighborhood school – few of its students are bused in – but it is a

neighborhood of fear and violence for the young. Positive feelings about being African-American were muted in the school culture. The library, for example, contained all the resources of an ordinary one – but an African-American section was only added in 1990.

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OAKLAND

Catastrophes are commonplace in Oakland. Fiscal crises, earthquakes, graft by public officials, turnovers in top leadership in the school district – these demoralizing events coincide with a constant increase in poverty. In addition, the district's enrollment is more than 90 percent minority, and 28 percent of students speak languages other than English at home. In nine of Oakland's 15 middle schools, more than one-half of the families were on welfare. About one-third of the students dropped out after the 10th grade. In the Clark schools, all of them grades seven to nine junior high schools, the annual retention rate was about 15 percent. Achievement scores were below state averages except in math, yet 58 of the 63 teachers in the three Clark project schools who responded to a 1989 survey believed they provided a challenging curriculum; 64 of 68 said they had high expectations of all students.

In a 10-year period, the schools coped with six different superintendents, each of whom reorganized and developed different priorities. Such instability, as well as budget problems, affected negotiations with teachers, whose union had come to distrust anything emanating from the district's administration. However, there were many inside and outside of the school system determined to make things better.

Barbara Daniels, a reform-minded middle-school principal, had become assistant superintendent before the Clark project began, and she welcomed the staff development support it offered. However, instability continued in the first few months of the Clark initiative: yet another new superintendent came in; additional central office administrators changed; the district was decentralized under area superintendents; and schools experienced a jump in enrollment. At the beginning of the second year of the Clark project, alternative centers for students with behavior problems were closed, sending these students back to their home schools with little warning or support. Teachers and principals often felt they had little choice but to just hold on and survive.

Like other Oakland schools in the Clark project, **Frick Junior High School** dealt with the turmoil in the district by going its own way. But Frick is a school held down by the problems outside. In a deceptively quiet residential area, it deals with the presence of a nearby burrito stand known to students as the afternoon "drug" store. More than half of its students' families are on welfare, and school officials estimate that 40 percent of its 700 students are in foster care, either formally or with relatives or neighbors. Some live on the street.

Suspensions at Frick were high (17 percent of the ninth graders in 1988-89, 20 percent of the eighth graders). The number of students scoring in the top quartile on

standardized reading tests was in single digits for all three grades. Most teachers do not stay long at Frick. In 1988-89, two-thirds of the teachers had been at the school for fewer than five years. "Teachers here have to bend so much," says June Jackson, principal for the first two years of the Clark project and for five years before that. "The trauma of students makes everything different."

If **King Estates Junior High School** were not owned by the school district, it would be prime real estate, just over a ridge rising above Oakland. There is little around it – an expressway far below, an elementary school next door. But such isolation did not guarantee tranquility in the first weeks of Lynn Dodd's appointment as acting principal, early in March 1991. She found a school ruled by behavior problems: she coped with a rumble of students from another school who arrived for a "revenge" encounter, and a few weeks later she had to round up her own students who had chased outsiders down to the expressway. From an initial attitude of distrust toward Dodd, her students had come to be on her side. "They were trying to protect me," she explains, still ruffled by the incident.

The morale problem of teachers, coupled with unresolved discipline problems, created apathy toward change, although some teachers had been more willing to try new ideas than the principal who held the job before Dodd. King, with more than a 90 percent black enrollment, had experienced five principals and one transition team over a nine-year period. Teacher turnover is very high. About 20 percent of the students are from families eligible for welfare. Sixteen percent were retained on the average each year before the Clark project began, and suspensions totaled 22 percent in eighth and ninth grades. Only 11 percent of students going on to high school scored in the top quartile on standardized reading tests. As Dodd surveyed the situation at her 785-student school, she concluded that "anything we do up here is going to take a lot of work."

It is difficult to find **Roosevelt Junior High School**'s front door, hidden as it is behind a chain-linked fence with only a narrow entrance for students and visitors.The school's ethos also is elusive.

Roosevelt's rich mix of 850 students – African-American, Hispanic and Asian – could be an interesting challenge for teachers. Here is a natural proving ground for a multi-perspective curriculum and teaching strategies. But Roosevelt is an example of a school paralyzed by problems and traditional ways of dealing with them. Its diversity has gone awry. Instead of a global village, it has become two entirely different worlds – one of teachers and another of students.

The teaching staff is experienced, but only a few have been at the school longer than five years. As the Clark project began, all teachers were certified at the secondary level. Clementina Duron, an experienced

When Principal Lynn Dodd arrived at Oakland's King Estates in March 1991, she found her biggest job was to win the trust of the students.

principal with a good background in research and Hispanic education, came to Roosevelt a year before the Clark initiative after five years as an elementary principal. She and her teachers did not see eye-to-eye.

"Schools have a difficult time changing," Duron admits. "There has to be a real impact upon people's mindset. In this school, intransigence is a problem. We mold the child to the school, not the other way around."

About two-thirds of Roosevelt's students participate in Chapter I services, attesting to their educational disadvantages. In 1988-89, suspensions were alarmingly high – from 24 to 32 percent of each grade. So were the number of students repeating a grade – from 14 to 18 percent. Scores on standardized reading tests improve as students move through Roosevelt (or drop out), but only 4 percent of ninth graders were in the top quartile in math as the Clark project began.

Surveys conducted in June 1990 revealed problems and uneasiness between teachers and students. Students believed only one-third of adults in the school felt they were good at something. They wanted more things to do – electives, art, music, drama, rap sessions, clubs. Teachers wanted more time together in grade-level meetings (as a balance to department meetings). Teachers were uncomfortable with the idea of an advisory period, even though students wanted time to talk about their problems.

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SAN DIEGO

A travel article refers to La Jolla, the northernmost area of San Diego, as "California's answer to Monaco." This seven-page article never mentions Barrio Logan 15 miles away, stretching East just a few blocks from the glitzy shopping malls downtown. These two very different communities have come together under the Clark project to make San Diego's bright future a good one, too, for impoverished young people.

The eighth largest urban district in the country, San Diego, in the past decade, has seen its once largely white, middle-class school population turn to a majority of several minorities – Hispanic, Asian, and African-Americans. Academically, Hispanics and African-Americans are most seriously at risk, but dropout rates are high for all three groups – 39 percent for Hispanics, 30 percent for Indochinese, and 28 percent for African-Americans. (The rate for other Asian students is 22 percent.) The school population is becoming more indigent; the needs of students are increasing. In the 1980s, the number of limited-English-proficient students increased 128 percent; the number of children whose families are on welfare went up 24 percent; students requiring special education increased more than 36 percent.

San Diego also is one of the few urban districts that anticipated the need for fundamental reform. Superintendent Thomas Payzant, hired in 1982, substituted long-range planning for crisis management (although in the spring of 1991, California's budget woes forced long-range planning off the agenda and $37 million in cuts on the school district). The Schools of the Future Commission reported in 1987 that despite the diversity and social problems of the San Diego community, "we can still make the American dream available to all" through innovative risk taking. By 1988-89, 32 of the district's nearly 150 schools were committed to major restructuring.

A note on the bulletin board at **Mann Middle School** tells all. "If you need help with a parent conference or a telephone call," it says, "here are some teachers who can translate." The languages listed on the one-page memo include Cambodian, French, German, Hebrew, Portuguese, Russian. These are in addition to the school's known resources for Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese. A wealth of diversity, a willingness to help each other make it positive for students and families – these characterize the attitudes in this sprawling, overcrowded school.

Trojan Avenue, which runs at the bottom of the school's perimeter, "is the longest street in the world," insists former sixth grade teacher Lou Padula. It connects Cambodia with Africa and goes through Mexico on the way, he says. The 32 different languages among Mann's 1,600 students prove him right.

Muirlands, with a third of its students bused in from the barrio, is in one of the most affluent areas of San Diego.

Converted to a middle school from a junior high in 1986, Mann benefits from a stable core teaching staff that buys into the middle-school philosophy. They also willingly take risks. The faculty rejected a proposal for year-round schooling, but then voted for an eight-period day to provide the time needed for interdisciplinary teaming. With 300 more students to be added in each of the next two years, the faculty reluctantly gave up the extra period because of severe space problems. Herein lies a dilemma for urban schools in general – an innovative faculty willing to work hard on improving chances for their students – but one that is threatened and pulled back by budget cuts.

"The public doesn't talk to us before they make policy," principal Julie Elliott says with exasperation. "We need people to see what is happening to our children." Her enrollment intensifies in its needs as it grows. "No one talks a lot to these kids at home," she says. "Apartments meant for a family with two children are housing maybe eight or nine. Not all have beds." The overcrowding at Mann also includes more emotionally and physically handicapped students, but the school enrollment will have to increase more before personnel for extra services, such as counselors, can be added. Only by piecing together different budgets can the school keep a full-time nurse; she usually has a line of students outside her door.

Two-thirds of Mann's students are eligible for Chapter I services, although because of limited funding only one-third are

receiving them. About 35 percent of the student enrollment turns over each year, but daily attendance is high for a disadvantaged student population, almost 93 percent. Achievement on standardized tests is good for a school in a poor community – at least 18 percent of each grade is in the top quartile on reading; at least 32 percent in math.

Hoping the enormous commitment of her faculty can overcome the problems of too many students and too few resources, Elliott wants every student to leave Mann "knowing what they choose to do is going to matter in their lives – and that they have the power to make those choices."

A zip down the hill running past **Muirlands Middle School** leads to La Jolla Cove and the best surfing beach in the San Diego area. About one-third of Muirlands students, however, rarely get a chance to enjoy the beach. They climb aboard buses every day for the 15-mile ride to Barrio Logan, a world apart from the wealthy enclave where they attend school. These are "VEEP" students, participating in the 14-year-old Voluntary Ethnic Enrollment Program. Integrating the VEEP students into the high-achieving environment of Muirlands is a problem that was not really addressed until the school switched from a junior high (grades seven through nine) to a middle school (grades six through eight) at the beginning of the 1990-91 school year. Allen Peck, principal at Muirlands until June 1991, guided the process of switching over

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with a specific goal in mind – organizing Muirlands so it becomes a high-performance school for *all* students. Despite the advantages Muirlands offered, the barrio students were not doing better than other minority students in the district on reading and math assessments. Their writing skills were above the district average, however. More important, barrio parents felt estranged from their children's school; few were involved, many were intimidated.

As representative of schools receiving VEEP students, Muirlands was chosen for the Clark project, says Deputy Superintendent Bertha Pendleton, to focus on gaining high performance for all ethnic groups – and to teach the other schools in the district how to do it.

SO DIFFERENT, SO SIMILAR

Like most urban schools, these 12 middle-grade schools are tough places in which to teach – or to be a student, for that matter. These schools do not fit neatly into any research analysis or reformer's view of change. They do share a few common characteristics that explain why they were selected for the Clark reform initiative. And why the process launched by the initiative was probably a difficult undertaking for all those involved. These schools know all too well:

• **Failure.** Large percentages of the students in these 12 schools are failing, but there were few incentives for students to try harder or for the staff to seek different ways to ensure their students' success. With two exceptions, these schools are awash in poverty-stricken families, and poverty and academic failure are found in tandem, according to Harvard University researcher Gary Orfield. Teachers in such schools tend to cling to the few successful students, or to one class that does better than others, for justification of their work – and for intrinsic rewards. The consequences of general failure by their students rarely come back to the teachers in these schools. The incentives to declare the status quo unacceptable and to find ways to change it are rare.

• **Turmoil.** Lack of stability does violence to urban middle schools. The high level of student turnover would stun teachers and administrators in other settings. The rent comes due, and families move on. Teacher turnover does as much damage to a school's stability. As soon as highly able teachers obtain seniority or special skills (including those provided by staff development in the Clark project), they move on. An exasperated central office administrator in Oakland suggested to a writing consultant that a training session include eight, rather than the usual four, teachers. That way, he said, at the end of two years there might still be a nucleus of trained teachers left. Principals and central office administrators also change frequently, jeopardizing leadership of reform efforts (although the wrong persons in charge of change efforts also inhibit the process). When a new boss

comes, decisionmaking is temporarily paralyzed, then priorities change. Urban middle schools live with such disruption all of the time, but policymakers do not seem to realize its effect upon teachers and students or care to minimize it.

• **Lack of vision.** When reform does take place, it is often a series of events, not a continuous process with an overall vision. Those who plan change from afar envision it as global and motivational. Those asked to carry out change in schools and classrooms often view it as incremental or as an intrusive burden. The visionaries frequently are too impatient and sometimes unrealistic. Teachers are often overly defensive and short-sighted. Teachers in urban middle schools usually do not have time to plan, reflect, and change course. They have only the minutes needed to stage an event. This becomes the fulfillment of the mandate to change: for example, one interdisciplinary unit to satisfy the planners, one extra hour a week to plan for teams. One can sense the frustration of teachers at a Clark project school whose principal presented them with three pages of descriptions of restructuring activities, from bumper stickers to parent socials to curriculum meetings. Exhausted after six to seven hours of constant pressure to hold the lid on with one hand and teach with the other, most teachers in traditionally organized urban middle schools would find it difficult to be visionary at the end of the day. Strong leadership – among teachers and/or principals – is needed to give a school's efforts to change overriding, deeply felt, and thoughtful commitment.

These are not all of the important elements shared among the Clark middle-grades schools. Each school, for example, certainly benefitted from a cadre of teachers willing to take risks, even before the Foundation came along with financial support. But a walk through the hallways of any of these schools would confirm their commonalities. The young adolescents there have unprecedented needs that the schools were not meeting. Instability is a given for these schools. And they were accustomed to responding to demands for change with disconnected, superficial events instead of a collective vision.

The following chapters describe how the people in these dozen middle schools began to acquire the skills to turn troubled institutions into ones where students could succeed. Formal data, evaluations, and assessments will be available in several years. Yet stories that affirm the specialness of these 12 schools and the people in them can be told now.

earching for leaders

and for a beginning to the process of change. . .

The road to school change is paved with paper plans. Each of the five districts in the Clark project prepared an elaborate proposal, responding to the generic goal to develop an education of "high expectations, high content, and high expectations" for young urban adolescents. The Clark intervention does not focus on changing individual structures per se, as in most school-based management and decisionmaking plans. A byproduct may be greater teacher empowerment, but the central goal is to prepare poor and predominantly

minority young adolescents for the years ahead by giving them strong academic skills and encouraging ambitious personal goals.

Additionally, by making grants to districts rather than individual schools and by emphasizing the systemic nature of change, the project seeks cohesion and permanence. If teachers adopt more effective curricula and instructional strategies, then district policies must be in step with them – and stay with them. If not, then the project's efforts become one more reason to blame bureaucratic barriers for failure.

Given an open agenda under broad goals – no cookbooks or lesson plans – do schools begin to change? The neatest process would follow some sort of model: for example, assessment, planning, capacity building, implementation, and evaluation. One school, Muirlands in San Diego, did well with a specific objective by going through the early stages carefully. Most of the other project schools began messily. The first few months of attempted change bogged down in definitions and pro forma organizational duties. Most schools also needed to find their leaders.

COMING TO TERMS

The theme of three "highs" prompted the Clark schools and districts to look at themselves and their students differently. A few took off gracefully; others stumbled. Some are still trying to get past the first steps. In almost every school building, the theme greets visitors on bulletin-board posters. Like school colors, mascots, and names, the theme is part of the scenery.

Yet from the outset, applying the three highs in classrooms has stumped many. The reasons are quite complex. Raising expectations, content, and support for disadvantaged students is a collective, not an individual, endeavor. People need to talk over what these mean, but as one researcher commented in reference to an urban district that is not part of the initiative: "People have to be extremely comfortable with one another before they start letting their hair down about such things...." Developing higher expectations goes to the emotional heart of how teachers view their work. Similarly, many teachers do not know how to approach the issue of higher content intellectually. Their own schooling gave them little experience with critical thinking.

Those who developed the initial proposals for the Clark Foundation were aware of the barriers built by such attitudes. Baltimore planners admitted that teachers reacted to students with serious educational problems in three ways – by relegating them to special education services, assigning them to remedial tracks and courses, or retaining them at grade level. The Louisville proposal reported that disadvantaged students were not challenged academically because of "the staff's mistaken equating of disadvantaged with inability." The Milwaukee proposal blamed tracking for low

In San Diego, Muirlands surveyed staff, students, and parents to determine how to make the school a better place for adolescents.

expectations and low achievement, as well as large school organizations, poor transitions into and out of middle schools, and fragmented support of students. Ability tracking of students created a "remedial atmosphere" in most Oakland schools, that district reported. Staff lacked knowledge of adolescent development, as well as how to create more flexible scheduling. And San Diego's planners worried that a majority of their district's teaching staff still used traditional methods learned in the 1950s and were reluctant to take risks with new ideas. As the student population became less white and middle class, the staff had developed a viewpoint that "students themselves are the barriers."

For good reason then, the school districts began and continue to push for major improvements in teachers' attitudes about students and what they can master.

ATTITUDES COUNT AT MUIRLANDS

At Muirlands in San Diego, the staff decided to first define the attitudes held by those in its school family. Ahead of them was a change from a grades seven through nine junior high to a grades six through eight middle school, slated to take place in September 1990. More than an organizational strategy, the staff viewed the move as a major philosophical one that would challenge teachers to see the student body differently and recognize different needs.

The principal, Allen Peck, saw this changeover as a special opportunity for the

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faculty to examine its expectations of students from the barrio. The La Jolla families are primarily white and upper-income. Muirlands offers more gifted/talented classes and wins more academic prizes than any middle or junior high school in the district. But for more than 10 years, at least one-third of the student body has been riding buses from the inner city to attend school in this idyllic setting.

Peck cares deeply about the barrio students. He learned Spanish as a teenager in Arizona and once worked for Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers. It worries him that some of his neighborhood parents get upset if they see too much integration in a classroom. Generally, the bused-in students were appreciated for keeping the school's enrollment up and the doors open, but expectations of their academic potential were low and they tended to be segregated in remedial programs.

As the school planned for its switch to a middle school, consultants from the Clark project suggested an assessment process of the whole school program. The school decided to use the Middle Grades Assessment Program (MGAP), a survey and process to help staff, students, and parents decide together on the school's strong points and how to make it a better place for adolescents. Developed by the Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill, MGAP has been used throughout the country.

When Milan Dimich, Muirlands' head counselor, first got the assignment to co-chair the MGAP process, he was not "too jazzed up about it." But as the 10 people on the MGAP committee dug more deeply, they realized that "this was serious." MGAP sets out ideals on every aspect of the school environment – safety, academics, diversity, self-definition, participation, social interaction, physical activity, competence and achievement, and structure and limits – 67 items in all.

Condensing an ordinary six-week process into three weeks, the committee interviewed 160 people, including counselors, teachers, students, parents, and support staff. Despite some initial skepticism among the faculty, Dimich recalls, "people took the report to heart because we realized we had a strong school, but we would have to address new needs as we moved to a middle school philosophy."

The MGAP report became the focus for planned change at Muirlands. It pushed the faculty more toward a child-centered program instead of a subject-oriented one. Committees formed around setting up a governance council, interdisciplinary teams, and advisories. They planned a summer institute for teachers; they organized painting crews of parents and teachers. "There was hardly a day during the summer when people were not at the school, getting ready for our first year as a middle school," Dimich says. *(Continued on page 42.)*

"You ask me anything about those schools and I can tell you," Howard Hardin says without a doubt in his voice. Director of Student Assessment and Instructional Choices for the Jefferson County (Louisville) Public Schools, he could say this to some degree about each of the 180 schools in the district. In 1985, Superintendent Donald Ingwerson asked this veteran district administrator to establish an assessment office

AN ADMINISTRATOR WHO POLISHES

and develop individual profiles of every school. Since then, the schools receive regular reports on how they are doing, complete with easy-to-understand graphs. Hardin's data go beyond achievement, including such items as attendance, parent participation, and attitude surveys of students.

When he was assigned responsibility for overseeing the three Clark schools in Louisville, Hardin knew what to do, and the schools knew what to expect. One national research study identifies a common ailment in large systems – a tendency for central offices to be afflicted with "projectitis." They gather funding like apples, then let the projects gradually rot, overwhelmed and understaffed for the tasks needed. In absolute contrast, Hardin is always polishing the Clark schools.

"You need to stretch people, but not break them," he says of his constant hovering over the schools. "That means giving them ongoing support, doing lots of prodding and pushing, and acknowledging problems." A former physics teacher who became a counselor and then an administrator during his 30-year career, Hardin brings twin skills to his work – the analytical that insists upon accountability and searches for ways to improve situations; and the compassionate that understands the struggles of teachers and students. "I'm not afraid to question people's motives," he explains, "but at the same time I want to help them and support them."

The Jefferson County schools have been restructuring for more than a decade under Ingwerson's leadership, especially in helping teachers and principals assume responsibility for higher standards and performance. The system's Gheens Academy, a staff development center, now enjoys a national reputation. In Hardin's view, this support of teachers is central to turning around low-performing schools. "If you commit to training teachers, then you have committed to implementation," he says. Disadvantaged urban schools, in his opinion, could be helped most by paying experts to go to the schools and help the teachers "to become the best trained in the district." This is Louisville's strategy with the Clark schools.

Hardin acknowledges the difficulties as well. Teachers may be eager for new knowledge and strategies, but they do not know how to integrate them into their classrooms, and the traditional school environment discourages collegial support. "We have not made it important for teachers to be strongly content-oriented," he

says, but if low-performing schools are to be successful, "teachers will need to be enthusiastic about content and know how to make it interesting for students."

Hardin's leadership style walks a tightrope. He is a familiar presence in the schools, at meetings with community leaders, in school newsletters, and in the district's Planning and Implementation Committee for the Clark project. He makes sure meetings are held regularly, information is shared, and follow-up takes place. Yet, he also chides the Foundation's program officers for inundating the schools with too many resource people. For example, the Clark project encouraged a relationship between the schools and the University of Louisville; when it faltered, he stepped in to help work out the problems.

Howard Hardin is a hands-on leader who believes in prodding and pushing his colleagues.

Louisville is a school system where accountability ranks high. Principals report directly to the superintendent with no middle-level layers to go through. Ingwerson expects one phone call from principals to result in action, such as for maintenance services; if not, the second call goes directly to him. In such an environment of swift and efficient responsibility, Hardin seems comfortable with being benevolent but demanding toward the Clark schools.

Louisville's teachers, exposed early in the project to workshops and continual training, showed immediate turnaround in their attitudes about poor students. Before the Clark project began, only one-fourth of the teachers in the three schools believed their students could achieve at a high level. At the end of the first year, three-fourths had confidence in their students. This was particularly satisfying to Hardin because of his concern that schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students "have been safe places to isolate certain kinds of people who really don't think these kids can learn."

When the Clark project started, Hardin recalls, "we said we would see major changes in two years, and there are some positive indicators." From his viewpoint, the schools are not moving as fast as they need to, yet he muses, "if we hadn't started, how many kids would we have missed?"

Oakland emphasized staff development in a project called STRETCH, but district problems made it tough going.

The school expanded activities for all students and selected the incoming sixth-grade teachers for their interest in adolescent development. Muirlands already had started a Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) program for its Chapter I students, a curriculum resource also supported by the Clark initiative that provides disadvantaged students with intensive practice in elaborated language and thinking skills, integrating computer programs with Socratic discussions. Teachers began to use their new common prep time to create strong teams and integrate gifted and talented program teachers onto the teams.

The MGAP momentum transferred to team committees. Each committee is represented on the school's new Governance Council where decisions are made on allocation of time and resources in the school. The teams first took up the issues raised by the MGAP process, says assistant principal Loyal Carlon III. School administrators and the faculty continue to use data to check on progress with the MGAP agenda. The faculty has now gone beyond needing to refer to the MGAP surveys, but their discussions revolve around issues of adolescent development and whole-school academic performance, says Carlon.

During its first year as a middle school in 1990-91, Muirlands focused on organizational matters. Expectations for the school's two very different student populations did

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not change much – until planning began for the second year. At this point, the faculty decided that all sixth-grade students would be in honors classes, and the advanced curriculum in the seventh and eighth grades would be open to all students wanting to try, with tutoring available for the asking.

Muirlands now aims to have all students performing at grade level when they graduate. "That would not have been said a few years ago," Peck believes. "That was a major victory."

OAKLAND: A PUSH FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT, BUT...

Oakland's staff development plan seemed exemplary on paper. The proposed model for increasing teachers' knowledge and skills – a substantive summer institute that included teaching, coaching, and reflection – might have worked in most urban districts. But the timing was unfortunate. In 1989, a Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools had called on the district to "build a system of staff renewal as the centerpiece for positive change." Exposure to state-of-the-art teaching and learning would reach all staff, continue over time with follow-up and support, and be tailored to staff-identified needs, the report said. It added that staff development also must address teamwork, conflict resolution, and issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and language.

This was a worthwhile goal for the Clark project, decided Barbara Daniels, assistant to the superintendent and coordinator of the Foundation's Oakland initiative. But Daniels' mission faced tough going. The Oakland district was mired in financial problems, including graft (from theft of student activity funds to questionable contract awards). Then there were two earthquakes (one geological, the other six superintendents in 10 years), paralyzing confrontations with the teachers' union, and a school population that had become overwhelmingly poor and disadvantaged.

Oakland called its Clark project STRETCH (Students and Teachers Raising Expectations to Challenging Horizons). The district organized a Summer Professional Institute in 1989 to introduce STRETCH teachers and others to ideas for restructuring that they applied to instruction for 500 students attending summer school at the institute. It also used community and business support to provide teachers with hands-on resources for enriching instruction for the students. Afternoon workshops for teachers reinforced what they were learning in the classrooms. The following summer a second institute focused particularly on math and writing.

The problem was that the knowledge gained from the summer institute experience did not transfer successfully to the school environment, and too few teachers from the Clark schools attended. According to Daniels, some of the project teachers who *did* participate did not return to the Clark

schools, and there was not enough money for substitute teachers to allow participants to continue their training during the year. In other words, not enough teachers remained in each school to form a core group dedicated to change. Indeed, outside consultants, available to help the schools develop a higher content science curriculum, found too few teachers in each school with the background and enthusiasm even to tackle the higher content approach. Consultants in other subject areas reported similar reluctance, or even hostility, on the part of Oakland teachers. In addition, Daniels' emphasis on staff development could not find support at the central office; one of the former superintendents had eliminated a central office unit for staff development, and consequently, it disappeared as a priority.

But consider the almost daily media reports of a school system which had hit bottom. The situation prompted Daniels to tell a reporter six months after STRETCH began that the biggest accomplishment to date may be that "the project has not faltered despite the unstable atmosphere in the Oakland district."

Then, before school opened in September 1990, the new superintendent, Pete Mesa, closed the district's "continuation schools," alternatives for the most disruptive students. He believed they would be better served in their home schools, but the change in policy was carried out with insufficient support in most situations. In the Clark schools, the "leadership" skills of these students found followers among their impressionable peers; for four to six months, a tug-of-war prevailed over who controlled the schools, students or adults. Forget staff development, higher content, or reflection on being a professional; just hang on.

Yet, Daniels, whose aim was more ambitious than hanging on, kept looking for ways to support the teachers, professionally. In the winter of 1991, with financial support from local businesses, the district sponsored two half-day retreats with teams from schools throughout the district – two teachers, two parents, two support staff, the principal, and an assistant principal. So damaged were the relationships between the central office and teachers that Daniels admits some came to the retreats saying, essentially: "Here we go again with just another plan. We want to be left alone."

Nevertheless, the teams spent time at the retreats planning together, setting a vision for their individual schools based on assessment data, a desire for better home/school relationships, and honest examination of current instructional practices. In larger sessions, simulations helped them identify attitudes that prevent change – who has formal and informal power in a school, for example, and how they use it. The retreat was part of a process mandated by Mesa to develop five-year improvement plans for

Barbara Daniels was a "turnaround" principal at Oakland's Claremont Middle School, earning respect for her ability to infuse a demoralized, poor-performing school with the will to change and the means to do so. She eliminated tracking in math in her first months at the school and rapidly pushed the faculty to expect more of a largely minority student body. Once moved to the central office, she became a

TURNING AROUND AND AROUND AT THE TOP

strong spokesperson for eliminating tracking and setting higher standards for students.

The central office, however, is not like the principal's office, as Daniels soon found out. Where her skills at leadership and pulling the best out of the people around her served Claremont Middle School well, they were applied to putting out fires in the volatile environment of the district's administration. She knew that the "whole dynamic of teaching children" has changed for teachers because of the needs of students. She learned that leadership at the district level, likewise, could not wait for stability to descend. The Clark schools, for example, had to contend with new leadership in the central office, higher enrollments, creation of area districts, and difficult discipline problems –"all at the same time," she notes.

Former middle-school principal Barbara Daniels took her leadership skills to the central office in Oakland.

Daniels' work to convince educators in her district to eliminate tracking continues on course, despite the distractions. She believes all students in the middle grades need a rigorous core curriculum, such as her staff became committed to at Claremont. The way to achieve that is through high quality staff development, says Daniels, and that is now her principal focus. Underlying this goal is a process that gives "power" to teachers, administrators, students, and parents in individual schools to make improvements and to be responsible for them.

Because the Clark school staff and principals have now planned together, and the three school faculties worked together at an institute before the 1991-92 school year began, Daniels sees a "uniform strategy" developing to achieve the Clark goals. The teachers and administrators "want to make a difference," she believes. Her job, she says, "is to provide the support and resources to keep the process going."

each school. The STRETCH network needed to fit that requirement into its own goals for the Clark project.

According to Daniels, the result was a development team at each school focused on accountability. They were starting over. Leaders were beginning to emerge. "People are now talking creatively and have a uniform strategy about where they want to take the students," she says. "It is the greatest focus and stability we've had in the last ten years." One outcome for the STRETCH schools was a faculty decision to discontinue the summer institutes; instead, *all* faculty from the three schools were to attend a week-long institute just before the opening of school, designed around what they felt were the most critical staff development issues – teaming, cooperative learning, and higher-order thinking. Additional staff development days during the year will focus on developing higher-content curriculum, the teachers decided.

Perhaps most important of all, the STRETCH teachers realized at the retreats that they had, in fact, made progress. They now had leadership to offer. The STRETCH experience, Daniels observes, enabled them "to be more focused, to be able to help other teachers learn how to change."

A MENU OF RESOURCES

In the five Clark cities, schools selected different entry points to try out the change process. Some added advisory and career awareness programs for students (high support), or trained for and experimented with cooperative learning (high expectations), or developed interdisciplinary units and new approaches to math and writing (high content). The Foundation strategy sought to give teachers solid ideas about how to help students meet the four program objectives – to finish the middle grades curriculum on time, to master higher-order reasoning and thinking, to exhibit improved self-esteem and attitudes toward school through supportive relationships with adults, and to understand the importance of good curricula choices to their options after high school.

A virtual candy store of resources toured the Clark schools. Experts presented ideas on math, science, writing, Junior Great Books, the Children's Express journalism project, advisory programs, community service, staff development, and parent involvement. Each resource offered staff development for its program. Regular visits from staff at the Center for Early Adolescence provided technical assistance. Every school had agreed to intensive evaluation of their progress on the project's goals.

The steady stream of ideas baffled many school faculties. Unaccustomed to such choices, they were frustrated about what they believed were an excessive number of options being foisted upon them; communication between central offices and schools, and even within schools, was insuf-

ficient to handle so many outside resources. Schools coped with the problem differently. Some said, in effect, "No more until we can absorb what we have." Others never said no, but still treated the ideas as intrusions rather than openings. Many teachers individually followed up on their own interests.

The overall effect, however, was positive. Every school tried something new in the first months of the project; by doing so, they worked through a process in which teachers and principals learned from mistakes and from successes. It took awhile, commented one principal, remembering her initial hesitance, "but I began to learn that I had permission to change."

he classroom becomes the center stage,

teachers become a troupe. . .

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By all classic definitions, many teachers in urban schools, perhaps even a majority of those in this group of 12 middle schools, are burned out.

Barry Farber, a clinical psychologist and author of *Crisis in Education: Stress and Burnout in the American Teacher*, found in surveys that 77 percent of urban teachers held feelings that indicated they were worn down. The process occurs over time. In his opinion, initial enthusiasm and dedication give way to frustration and anger over the stress of teaching.

This makes teachers feel inconsequential; they withdraw their commitment. The less investment in work, the fewer rewards. Eventually, the feelings infect whole staffs. Complaints, denigration of students, and alternative career plans become "less like a shameful emotion and more like a battle wound worthy of showing off," says Farber.

For too long, the work lives of many teachers in the middle schools of the Clark cities have been inconsequential. Rewards came from the few successful students or classes, even the field trip where everyone returned without incident. Individual teachers or principals who tried to change ran up against difficult odds.

Some Clark schools exhibit the tension between child-centered teachers and subject-centered ones, between veteran teachers languishing in schools that no one in the past paid much attention to and idealistic but less experienced ones who have become frustrated because they cannot influence the ethos of the school. Many younger teachers, once they gain seniority and experience, move on. Seldom having control over who teaches in their schools, principals juggle what they have. One Oakland teacher complained that her school "has so much potential, if the district would just let us try. Last year they sent us an elementary music teacher to teach social studies and an elementary physical education teacher who is unable to deal with kids this age. When the district sends us people who don't want to be here, change gets harder and harder."

Which comes first, student apathy, absenteeism, and bad behavior? Or teacher apathy, diminished dedication to work – an absenteeism of a sort – and dependence upon authoritarian behavior to make things right?

Considering the often disabling conditions of urban students, their families, and their communities, teachers are the ones who must take the first steps away from destructive habits. The knowledge base for doing so has never been richer. Long years of investment in research and demonstration programs provide today's teachers with a wealth of good information on obtaining academic success and higher self-esteem among children long considered too "damaged" or too "different" to learn.

The Clark project schools tapped into this knowledge. Just as important, their teachers did so, for the most part, together. And together, they are beginning to feel consequential again.

CREATING FAMILIES

One of the tenets of middle grades reform for all kinds of students is smallness – houses and/or teams within larger buildings that provide a more attentive structure around youngsters.

With more than 700 students, Frick Junior High School in Oakland is larger than the average middle-grades school but about av-

erage among the 15 middle or junior high schools in the district. It conducted a survey using the Middle Grades Assessment Program that offered staff some valuable insights. Only half of the students, for example, felt teachers were interested in what they thought; most parents said their children had no adult at the school whom they felt close to. The students wanted more involvement, but they also wanted quiet places in the school.

Frick teachers found direction for dealing with these problems by focusing at workshops and retreats on a higher content curriculum. The school started on this objective with some good experience – an effort already three years old to form heterogeneous grouping in math and provide all students with algebra or pre-algebra skills before graduation to high school. Yet student alienation kept the school from progressing, and absenteeism remained high. The math project affected only a small group of teachers.

Discussions on high content piqued the Frick teachers' interest in interdisciplinary teaching. This led to a decision to go for teaming and to create "castles," in which groups of students stay together all day with a team of core teachers. By dividing the school into castles, teachers obtained common planning time, flexibility to schedule block periods, and closer relationships with students. There are castles for seventh, eighth, and ninth grades and a combined grades seven and eight team. Organizing the teams required a massive moving day as teachers regrouped from subject-matter departments to castles. "That ruffled a few feathers," says Donna Blochwitz, perhaps Frick's most enthusiastic supporter of teams, but she contends that after only a year's experience, "you will see fire in some of our eyes over teaming."

She explains that the smaller units give teachers and students greater chances to succeed. When one group of teachers has the same students all day, there is more collegiality among both teachers and students. "Some teachers may see a class as full of hell-raisers, others call the same group of students angels," Blochwitz says. "We learn from each other." As an experienced teacher, Blochwitz can get positive

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Left: In Oakland, Frick teacher Donna Blochwitz believes "teaming" helps teachers and students succeed.
Below: Teachers Lou Padula and Timothy Shaw plan together, sharing insights about individual students at San Diego's Horace Mann.

peer conduct going that carries over to another class where a newer teacher benefits. She also observes that because students are together all day as a group, "they don't have to catch up on socializing at the beginning of each class." A side product of the castles is that students are learning to work in groups; cooperative learning takes place now in almost all classes.

June Jackson, principal at Frick when the castles were formed, found the process of organizing and starting the teams difficult for teachers at first. "It takes time and training for people to learn to work together," she explains. "Some relish an opportunity to change; for others, it is quite painful, even though they are stagnating."

The proof that forming teams was the right decision for Frick appears in the school's commitment to carry the idea further, adding teachers of elective courses, Chapter I teachers, and others not included in the original plans. More interdisciplinary teaching is now taking place.

There are some holdouts; a school report estimates that 15 percent of the faculty is not yet convinced of the castle idea. One problem is a shortage of teachers in some subjects to provide balanced teams. (Jackson filled in as a science teacher for half of a school year at one point; the previous year a typing teacher taught three classes of math.) There is a feeling by a few that just changing the group size and curriculum will not reduce the alienation of students. But almost everyone agrees that Frick teachers combined a goal of higher content with a more student-centered structure to produce a place that, as one skeptic admits, "is better for kids."

THE POWER OF DIVERSITY

Down the coast in San Diego, the Horace Mann Middle School is bursting at the seams, a phenomenon its 1,600 students could describe in 32 languages. As part of a district-wide commitment to school reform, Mann began experimenting with restructuring ideas at least two years before it was able to formalize the efforts through the Clark project. Over the years its teachers had been selected on two major criteria – belief in the middle school philosophy and a desire to

work with culturally diverse students. The positive attitude of teachers in this school virtually shines, despite an increasingly poor and ethnically diverse student body. "I have two ESL classes," remarks a Chapter I teacher, "and the only thing the students have in common is their knowledge of

English. This is a great school, and the diversity is what makes it so." Teacher turnover at Mann is not a problem.

Knowing the enrollment would shoot up over the next few years, the faculty decided to experiment with interdisciplinary

With cooperative learning, students in small groups help each other learn.

teaching in 1989-90. Core curriculum and block scheduling were already in place, but not teaming. The four teachers who agreed to try it attended a summer institute for interdisciplinary teaching, then developed strategies for science, math, social studies, and English. The team also benefitted from a student advisory period and common preparation period. As vice principal then, one of Julie Elliott's jobs was designing the schedules, so she was well aware of the "nightmare" that would confront teachers if they were to adopt teams schoolwide. But when she assumed the principalship in the fall of 1990, she pushed for teaming. "I had always worked on teams," she says, recalling her experience at high schools and a school for the creative arts, "and I saw how much isolation there was at Mann." For the 1990-91 school year, the faculty divided into nine teams, and an eight-period day gave them both an individual and a team preparation period. A year later, the school had to revert to a seven-period day because of overcrowding; teachers lost some preparation time. Daily advisories provide a small-group setting for students with a teacher from their team.

The plan did not work perfectly, Elliott admits. Some teams collapsed; some came together naturally. Sixth-grade teachers Tim Shaw and Lou Padula, for example, had been doing projects together already, linked by common interests and an easy working relationship. With as many as 34 students in a class, Shaw says it is much better to have several teachers watching out for the same group of students. "If we need to talk to a kid, we can call him or her in during our common prep period and talk things over, and we can involve the counselors."

At a daily team meeting in another section of the school, five teachers and a counselor sit in a circle to discuss plans and individual students, using a language of caring that might not surface were they dealing with students on their own. Counselor Edward Duenez advises the teachers to be more helpful to students moving from Chapter I to regular classes, because "they have been getting a lot of individual attention, then they get dropped into a class with 35 other students and with a teacher who doesn't have quality time to get to know them." A teacher responds that one of these students "is doing real well in my class. I'll give him a good-conduct mark." Duenez replies, "I'll call his Mom today. She always gets calls only about bad things."

The team meeting continues in this mode, with "Mom" and "Dad" frequently mentioned in the conversations and teachers sharing insights about individual students. They help the counselor plan an outing to a baseball game for SUCCEED students, those who have made a big turnaround in achievement (parents will be invited to go along, too; and as a subtle advertisement for higher goals, the group will first stop in at the San Diego State University campus for a tour and lecture). The teachers discuss an article from the morning newspaper, about the high illiteracy rates among prisoners in the county. They link the information to their own students and reaffirm their commitment to offer more help to students.

Larry Stanforth has been an English teacher for 14 years, but this is his first experience on a team. "I am learning so much from peers," he says. "I would have a hard time going back to not being on a team. Before, we would be banging our heads against the wall with some kids, demanding homework but not knowing that the kids are coming from homes where parents are smoking crack all the time. The counselor helps us understand the whole kid." Stanforth adds that the team meetings are also psychologically good for teachers: "Sometimes we just vent with each other."

Lack of time, budget cuts, and severe space problems hamper the Mann teachers at every turn, but their growing experience with teaming, multi-cultural curricula, and student support leads them toward another goal they have adopted – to become a Professional *(Continued on page 56.)*

It takes three to five years to build a good school from a failing one. It takes only three months to destroy a good one. This is Efrain Vila's common-sense philosophy, an attitude that allowed him to step back from the confusing controversies at Kosciuszko Middle School in Milwaukee when he became principal—and take hold. As the Clark project began in 1989, a new principal at Kosciuszko, with an intense

NEW LEADER, NEW STRATEGIES

affinity for the school's 80 percent minority enrollment, clashed with a veteran teaching staff. Half of them had been at the school more than 10 years; they were working on ideas for change and did not take redirection easily. The situation escalated to grievance procedures, and the staff struggled to move on anything other than their immediate problems.

When Vila came aboard in 1990, after several years at the community district level and 23 years in the school system, he immediately set about to bring everyone back together. The Clark's three "highs" and objectives helped, he says, because they provided a hook for a coordinated vision in the school. "Kozy," as it is warmly called by staff and people in the community, had become a school-wide Chapter I site. Vila's office soon became papered with summaries of staff discussions on how to merge the Chapter I plan with the opportunities offered by the Clark initiative—new curriculum ideas, different ways of supporting students, a focus on finding ways to succeed with poor, minority students.

"They had to test the guy behind the desk," Vila acknowledges. Teachers realized the new principal wanted them to own the process of change but was not afraid to say what he expected to happen in the school. "Fundamental change is very evolutionary," he says. To move the process along, he tries to be a facilitator, sharing ideas from multiple sources with teachers and making sure they confront certain data. "We have an 18 percent failure rate," he notes. "We need to identify the problems that cause it, and money may not be the root one." Being an instructional leader, he adds, does not mean that "you do it all but that you use staff leadership to bring about change."

Although a Milwaukee union contract provision limits mandatory staff development to teachers who are in trouble, Vila is trying to develop a voluntary attitude that accepts a professional growth plan as part of each teacher's job. Ultimately, he says, teacher performance should be judged by peers. "If a new teacher comes in and says the principal is a hard ass, teachers will say, 'Don't worry about him. We are the ones who will judge you.' "

When Vila came to Kozy, he found a staff already more children- than subject-oriented, one described by outside consultants as "a warm place for kids." Teachers

Efrain Vila was the third principal in three years at Kozy. Change is "evolutionary," he says.

were also skeptical of quick-fix changes and educational fads. While the Clark project provides lots of ideas, Vila and his teachers decided they needed to sort through the various resources, using only those which augmented the changes already taking place, such as cooperative learning and career linking. "We are learning together to say 'no,' " he explains. But Vila also believes teachers and principals must help each other "be on top of every educational development so we can determine those which will mean the most to us."

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Practices Center for the district. Teachers felt confident enough to become "experts" at a summer interdisciplinary institute for San Diego teachers. According to Bertha Pendleton, deputy superintendent and coordinator of the Clark project in San Diego, the Mann teachers "have reached a new level of collaboration, and they are pursuing their goal of becoming a training center with gusto."

CHEERLEADING FOR COOPERATIVE LEARNING

At the Parkman Middle School in Milwaukee, the Clark project freed the creativity and energy of one teacher, who went on to influence the practice of many others. In the opinion of Deborah McGriff, former assistant superintendent in Milwaukee and now superintendent in Detroit, good teachers, no matter what their age or experience, need to keep "becoming" more professional: "You can't do what you need to do with kids if you don't model learning." She cites as a positive example Belle Tomasello, resource teacher at the all-black, very poor Parkman Middle School. Tomasello's experience as an innovator within a demoralized environment perhaps typifies urban teaching more so than the upbeat attitude at San Diego's Mann Middle School.

At Parkman for 13 of her 18 years as a teacher, Tomasello is a race walker who practices in the school hallways during her lunch hour. "I'm very visible," she admits. Her room is also a "safe house" for the students who constantly troop in or pause at the doorway between classes.

Four years ago, Tomasello, who once considered anthropology or the theater as a

Parkman resource teacher Belle Tomasello, a race walker during her lunch hour, trains Milwaukee teachers to use cooperative learning.

career, was searching for something to renew her teaching and stumbled upon cooperative learning. She plunked down her own money to attend a workshop on the subject in Milwaukee; of the 150 teachers there, she says, only two were from the local district. Her push to get other urban teachers to understand the value of cooperative learning for largely minority and poor students has been uphill ever since. Tomasello attended advanced training, read everything she could, and drew from different models to build strategies comfortable to her. With the Clark project's open-ended support for innovation, she was prepared to give Parkman a peg on which to hang change. The school is working on other aspects of change – high content math and career education, for example – but its experience with cooperative learning provides better lessons on school reform.

Project funds were used to train teachers on cooperative learning. Exchange visits with teachers from the other Clark school in Milwaukee inspired some at Parkman to become interested in the strategies; Tomasello's demonstrations reinforced them. Twenty teachers signed up for training, and as the 1990-91 school year began, Tomasello was working with 15 teachers willing to try cooperative learning. Now, her early Thursday morning collegial support group for cooperative learning is down to seven. The teachers who stepped back from the idea found that it was too demanding. "If I co-teach or find the lesson plans for them, then they participate," Tomasello surmises. But she thinks it is all right for the teachers to back off for awhile. It takes three years of experience to become comfortable with the idea of turning some classroom control over to students, she explains.

Furthermore, teachers do not respond well to mandates or even strong hints from administrators that they adopt certain practices, Tomasello believes. The incentives must come in other ways. For example, she helped an eighth-grade class study the Preamble to the Constitution in cooperative groups; they all passed. "Then, the kids wanted the rest of the Constitution taught the same way," she says. "They see the value of working this way, and they will pressure their teachers." Students may not be able to articulate why they like cooperative learning, but Tomasello can: "Students become more sensitive to one another, they experience success in a group, they find out that all can succeed. They start fewer fights."

To make such a change possible, teachers need time to work it through in their own classrooms – and they need to feel they are doing this voluntarily, Tomasello believes. She has now trained about 100 teachers in the Milwaukee school system on cooperative learning. While the teacher turnover rate at Parkman is difficult to cope with – as many as one-third each year – Tomasello sees one candle burning: "When they leave Parkman, they take their knowl-

West Baltimore principal Sheila Kolman (center) believes in a whole school approach to cooperative learning. Teachers Joan Hammonds (left) and Pamela McNeil (right) assist in planning.

edge about cooperative learning with them and spread it around."

KEEPING HEADS ON IN BALTIMORE

Like many of the Clark project schools and their teachers, the two school sites in Baltimore initially felt overwhelmed by the calling – to break new ground on staff development, curriculum, and student support all at the same time. The challenge in Baltimore was augmented by a central office in turmoil, as well as budget cuts and a new principal in one school the second year.

But the schools had two ace cards. One was a tradition of staff development focused on the whole school. Together, Baltimore teachers were able to ignore distractions in the hierarchy above and develop clear priorities for themselves. With Clark funding, for example, Calverton Middle School included all of its faculty in special training on at-risk students and school leadership. Now, says principal Frances Ellington, if a problem comes up, "all the teachers have the training, so they can't look for others to fix things."

At West Baltimore Middle School, a walk through the halls confirms the presence of a schoolwide ethos. Every classroom visibly shows – in bulletin boards, arrangement of desks, and the ways students and teachers treat each other – that this is a school dedicated to cooperative learning. West Bal-

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timore principal Sheila Kolman does not mince words. Staff development on cooperative learning had been going on for some time at her school, but only about one-half of the teachers were using it. The school committee wrote cooperative learning into its Foundation proposal, Kolman says, because "I told them that we were not going to work with an idea that is here today and gone tomorrow; we are all going to do this right." This emphasis on a whole-school approach enables a "critical mass" to form to support change.

The other advantage of the Baltimore schools was and remains a close working relationship with researchers at the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Youth at The Johns Hopkins University. For the researchers, the Baltimore schools provide an essential laboratory; for the schools, the researchers give direction and support.

The line between research and support blurs when a good partnership develops. Unlike the lonely work of Tomasello at Parkman Middle School in Milwaukee, when West Baltimore sixth-grade teachers found cooperative learning in their reading classes involved more paperwork and time than they imagined, they had outside help. Three teachers wanted out after just two months, but Robert Stephens, a researcher from Johns Hopkins, sat down with them and discussed the problems. "We talked about what could be taken out and what had to be left in," recalls Joan Hammonds, the head of the English department. Stephens encouraged them to continue, and within a matter of months it turned around. "The teachers became our leading proponents of cooperative learning," he explains. "What turned it around was that they saw improvements in their students as far as class behavior was concerned."

Sixth-grade teachers were working with an innovative approach to reading instruction – Student Team Reading – which focuses on comprehension rather than discrete skills and uses literature anthologies of material considered more appealing to students than traditional texts. In the second year of the Clark project, the program expanded to seventh and eighth grades, and sixth-grade teachers tackled Student Team Writing. Both programs depend upon skillful use of cooperative learning in classrooms, an ongoing research interest of Johns Hopkins.

"Goals are what we are all about anyway," comments Ellington. Her immediate worries – such as getting her students to and from school without being attacked by gangs – might have become her only goals were it not for the offer of professional growth for herself and teachers through the linkage of the schools with the university. Having that focus, she says, enables the "pockets where people are working very hard" to come together into a critical mass willing to change.

nderstanding what high content means

for teachers and for students. . .

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The hard work of making urban middle schools successful lies in the curriculum. This is not where schools usually begin when they consider reforms. Too many never get to this point at all and instead become enmeshed and discouraged with organizational change. Joyce Epstein of The Johns Hopkins University, studying the effects of curriculum offerings on eighth graders, observes: "The core – the essence – of any school is its curriculum and instruction. No matter what else is improved in the name of school reform or restructuring, if

DIGGING DEEP

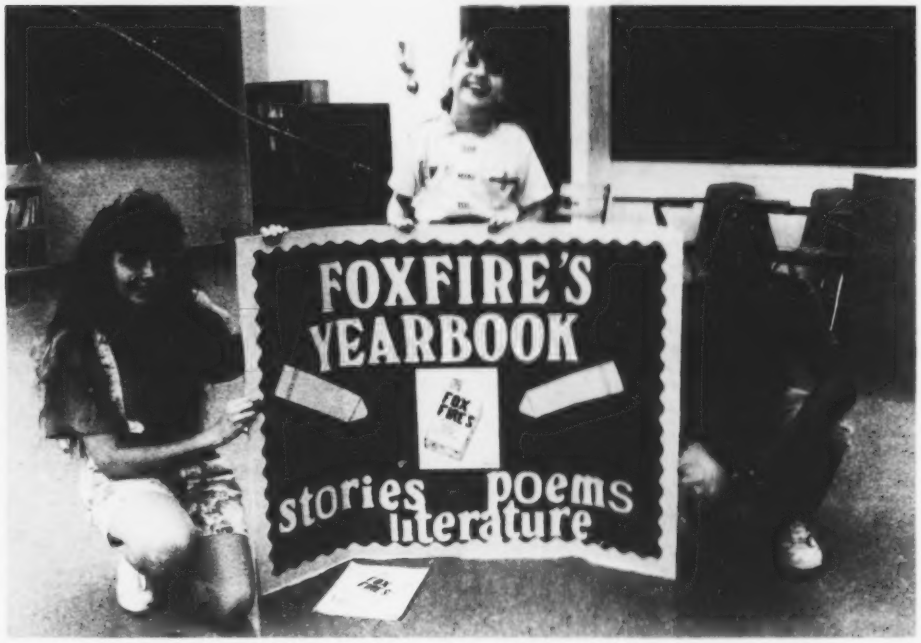
the curriculum does not challenge the students or if the instructional approaches are inappropriate, the students will not learn as much as they might, nor will they develop a love for learning.... Schools usually work first on mechanical changes that are immediately visible, such as creating teams of teachers who work in wings of schools; or establishing seven-, or eight-, or 16-period days; or scheduling a teacher-group advisory period to discuss students' concerns and development. These are important but not sufficient reformations for improving middle grades education and increasing the success of early adolescents."

Curriculum and instructional reform, Epstein admits, takes longer than mechanical changes. It also is the most difficult for teachers to define, to shape into something they can use. Speaking to a meeting of the Clark middle-grades project schools, math teacher Jaime Escalante, of "Stand and Deliver" fame, talked passionately about teaching and about *ganas*, a powerful urge to succeed, to get ahead. "*Ganas* requires a team effort," he said. "If you expect your kids to be winners, they will be winners.... They rise or fall to the level of expectations around them, especially parents and teachers." What makes Escalante an especially good teacher, however, is his thorough knowledge of math and his ability to use that knowledge as a way of cajoling, inspiring, reinforcing, and stretching his students into learning at a high level. "I become very passionate about the subject I teach. With that, I capture the minds of my students," he said.

The constraints on shaping a high-content curriculum in urban middle grades are formidable. Consider that substantial percentages of most middle-school faculty received elementary certification – not a deficit in itself, but it means the teachers probably did not delve deeply into a content area in their teacher preparation. With different views of curriculum created by separate certifications, the political climate for change might be tense among teachers. Consider the overwhelming focus on remedial instruction in poor, urban schools. Mike Rose of UCLA in *Lives on the Boundary* points out that remedial work reinforces a child's fear or disinterest in learning, stripping from learning "the vibrancy and purpose, the power and style, the meaning of the language." Consider that the concept of high content rarely concerns educators in general. Usually relegated to gifted/talented classes, it is not a topic teachers dwell upon in professional conversations.

At a seminar with middle-school teachers from the Denver schools, observers noted that teachers were not comfortable with "thoughtfulness" and dodged basic issues in trying to invent high-content instruction. Many teachers, they reported, were afflicted with the 'Yes, but...' syndrome. Presented with solid evidence about successful programs for higher literacies in

the classroom, the teachers responded with "yes this works, but...." The idea that high content could be successful in mixed ability groups seemed the most difficult to accept. Yet underlying the issue of providing high content is the equally important one of



access by all students.

The Clark project schools struggle with these problems, but they are making some progress. During the conference at which Escalante spoke, about 100 teachers and administrators worked their way through a definition of high content. As compiled by staff of the Center for Early Adolescence, **instruction in a school with high content:**

• Consciously teaches higher-order thinking skills. Epstein's research on eighth graders concludes that "students generally benefit in skills and behavior in math and English from higher level math instruction and more difficult reading and writing activities." In this country, she explains, there are probably fewer problems caused by "pushing ahead" than by "holding back." Other studies, especially the National Association of Secondary School Principals' shadow study of eighth graders, say the same thing: youngsters this age are bored by their studies.

• Constructs active learning opportunities. Students need to be discovering, rather than receiving, knowledge. Teachers need

to be coaches and facilitators. Response from principals of schools surveyed by Epstein and Douglas Mac Iver, also a Johns Hopkins researcher, indicate that schools at the extremes – high socio-economic and low socio-economic scales – provide the most hands-on, experiential instruction. Perhaps the former tend to tie it to critical thinking, and the latter deal with it at a superficial level.

• **Makes greater use of original source materials.** High content minimizes the dependence on textbooks, especially because they do not usually contain rich multi-perspectives on the curriculum for urban students. Using richer resources for instruction also supports the first two points, allowing students to deal with higher order thinking and become active researchers themselves.

• **Integrates and interrelates subjects and disciplines.** Early adolescents' cognitive growth leads them to integrate their knowledge, to get meaning from a whole perspective. Working across disciplines, teachers can match the other three characteristics of high-content instruction to the development of their students. Not unexpectedly, teachers already pursuing high-content instruction fear interdisciplinary units will water-down their curriculum. Avoiding that problem takes skillful negotiating by those with a good grasp of high content.

The Clark teachers and administrators also agreed that **schools focused on high content will reorganize in order to:**

• **Establish heterogeneous grouping.** Ability tracking is the most pervasive barrier to high-content instruction in urban middle schools (in all schools, for that matter). The research evidence against tracking has never been so conclusive; in the Clark project, heterogeneous grouping is almost a given. Schools are only beginning to know how to do it, however, and a residue of tracking lingers in many places under other guises.

• **Establish teams or houses of learning,** with common blocks of time that allow for flexible scheduling and joint prep time for teachers to plan. Many of the middle schools in the Clark group established house organizations long before this project began, although some of the high principles behind teaming had begun to atrophy. Teachers' need for time to plan, individually and together, motivated the schools to experiment with eight-period days (although competing needs forced some to drop this idea); most also negotiated additional staff development days during the school year.

• **Establish schoolwide assessment alternatives to standardized tests.** Teachers may feel this action is out of their control, accustomed as they are to "covering" specified content in order to fulfill requirements for standardized testing. Yet the policy climate for "authentic" testing strategies reflecting high-content instruction has never

been better. Teachers can take this risk.

• **Promote participatory school-based decisionmaking along with accountability for student outcomes.** In the Clark project school districts, central offices are encouraged to provide the freedom to schools to achieve agreed-upon outcomes; teachers are encouraged to take hold of the process of changing the school culture in order to meet specific goals for students.

High-content instruction shows up in every Clark project school. Young students from as many as four different language backgrounds sit in a circle at the Mann Middle School discussing the Trojan War. In another classroom, an equally diverse group of Chapter I students wrestles with the meaning of the word "manifesto." In Oakland, seventh graders ride the BART subway system, then develop algebraic language for negative and positive numbers by describing the coming and going of the subway cars. In Louisville, students working together write books, plays, and poems and build sculptures about topics they chose themselves.

In the early stages of making urban middle schools successful places for students, these examples are more idiosyncratic than reflective of whole-school change. Some argue this is the most that could reasonably be expected of urban school cultures; if a student has one exceptional class and teacher every day, this is a victory, considering the state of teachers' knowledge about high-content instruction. The framework of the Clark middle grades project acknowledges that high content may begin with a single effort, but contends it cannot endure unless most teachers actively buy in. Schools and school districts need to undergo systemic change, lest all the efforts wither away at the fringe.

ADDING IT UP

Being part of the Clark middle-grades initiative meant having access to a smorgasbord of ideas for developing high-content curricula. All of the subjects were important for whole-school change. Yet the entry point for high content among most of the Clark schools became math, the gateway subject for their students. The challenge was to provide pre-algebra or algebra instruction before high school. True, most students can complete a full three- or four-year sequence of challenging math during the high school years, but offering algebra in the middle grades, especially to disadvantaged urban students, does much more than prepare them for higher-level math. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins explains: "...[T]he wide availability of a full algebra course in grade eight may have more to do with the message given to students about the importance of math than with the importance of the course of algebra itself. Schools that stress algebra as important for many students make a public statement and take actions that demonstrate the value they place on math-

ematics. That emphasis may motivate more students to work hard in math."

A related research finding appears in studies by the College Board which concludes that the single most important predictor of college completion is whether a student took geometry in high school. Unless math becomes important to urban students in the middle grades, they are unlikely to progress to geometry in high school.

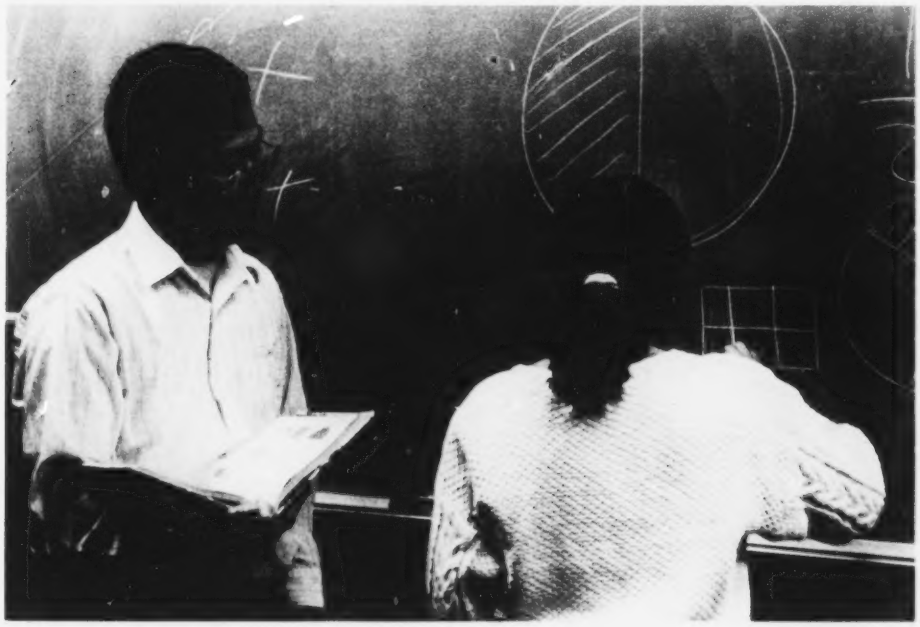
A prerequisite to algebra instruction is innovative teaching in all math courses. Yet an Educational Testing Service study of middle-grades math instruction in urban schools, including schools in Baltimore and Louisville, found uninspired instruction. "Teachers dominated classroom talk (teachers spent between 86 and 89 percent of the time we observed talking, while students talked only 11-14 percent of the time) and exerted tight control over pupils' actions," it says.

More pervasive, ETS pointed out, was obvious ability tracking, even in districts where the elimination of tracking was a publicly stated goal. Not only were minorities over-represented in low ability classes, but they were treated differently in mixed classes. The researchers comment: "Even when minority and white students were in the same math classes and ability groups, teachers treated them differently.... [I]n predominantly minority classes designated as low ability, minority students received more comments about their behavior than did their white classmates (even after controlling for class composition). In the predominantly white high ability classes, teachers provided more information to white students than to their minority classmates (again controlling for class composition)."

Robert Moses' Algebra Project, adopted by two of the five Clark districts, addresses these issues. Working with African-American youngsters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Moses designed a program introducing sixth-graders to algebraic concepts through an emphasis on language development. His five-step strategy proceeds from a physical event (such as riding a subway) through picturing the event, talking and writing about it in one's familiar language, "structuring" the language into the standard English used in science and math, then finally creating a symbolic description (algebra). Moses explains that this approach shifts instruction "from curriculum to a curricular process." Children whose background does not involve elaborate language (Moses emphasizes the importance of family involvement in his process) often fail to move to higher content math because of language confusion. "For years, traditional textbooks have taught them about the differences between addition and subtraction," he explains, "but algebra sees subtraction as the opposite of addition." Teachers need "to work them through the language of math very carefully."

Math is the gateway for high content in many of the Clark project schools.

In Moses' curricular process, "the city becomes a textbook," as does the kitchen, the yard, a wind-up toy. The Algebra Project encourages students to work together on problems. Also, Moses insists, computational skills do not need to be down pat in order to learn algebra. The new standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) confirm that point.



As with any curriculum idea that goes against the grain, the Algebra Project ran into tepid or nonexistent support from the five cities. Moses and his staff visited school sites in every city except Baltimore and offered training. Some enthusiastic teachers who participated in training left their schools soon afterwards, a frequent problem for outside resource groups investing in the most willing and skilled teachers. But two years into the initiative, the Algebra Project is showing the way to higher content in at least three schools, where a total of 14 teachers are using the method.

The Algebra Project's attempts to introduce its method in the Clark schools led to the identification of a number of **obstacles to implementing innovative curricula.** Moses included these in a report to the Foundation:

• **Reluctance to abandon old standards and practices**, "sometimes even when it is clear that they are not working." Even in those schools where teachers and principals are firmly committed to the new

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curriculum, "they seem to think that they still must get through all the 'regular' sixth grade mathematics materials." This leads to cutting corners and downplaying the new curriculum.

• **Teachers who are wedded to the mastery approach to math instruction**. These teachers believe students cannot move on to the next topic until they have demonstrated full mastery over the current one, even if the two do not depend on one another.

• **Concerns about students' performance on standardized tests**. Teachers are very anxious about how their students will perform on standardized tests if not enough time is spent on computation, drill, and mastery of the specific areas included in the tests. Thus, they tend to leave a new curriculum come springtime when testing time is near. (In other cities, Algebra Project students have performed as well or better on standardized tests, without any efforts to teach to the tests.)

• **Reluctance of teachers to transform their approach to the delivery of math education**. This means moving from lecturer/deliverer of information to inquirer/invoker of discussion among students as fellow learners, adjusting to cooperative learning, and learning how to manage an experientially based approach to math. Moses points out that these new skills will be needed for all teachers if the new NCTM standards are to be adopted.

• **A difficult political context for new curricular approaches**. Consensus needs to exist at all levels – central office, the principal's office, and among parents and the broader community. Budget problems and personnel shifts hamper efforts to change. Because of the time and effort needed to train teachers for new approaches, "the loss of one such teacher after a year in the project can be a serious blow."

• **Deficiencies in teacher preparation**, especially an emphasis upon keeping up professionally. The Algebra Project staff contends that certification/specialization is not as much of a problem as teachers' "disposition toward taking a new approach to teaching mathematics and a willingness to present themselves as learners."

DETRACKING IN OAKLAND

Teachers at Frick Junior High School in Oakland faced these dilemmas several years ago. Studying the path of their graduates in high school, they found that 78% wound up in 10th grade general math classes – a placement which is a reliable predictor of future dropouts. At Frick, math was tracked, but in 1986 only 21 students passed Algebra I. The teachers knew expectations were low, but they estimated that incoming students performed math at only a fourth-grade level.

However, they also realized that tracking contributed to continued poor performance. In the 1987-88 school year, the Frick math department removed the lowest track from all grade levels – no more remedial

math. It abandoned general math in the ninth grade, placing all ninth graders in either Algebra I or Pre-Algebra. This latter move more than doubled the number of students who selected algebra in high school. A year later the teachers created Algebra A for ninth graders with good math skills; 85-90 percent of the Algebra A graduates receive grades of C or better in Algebra I in high school. At the same time, the teachers began to weave a new California math framework into seventh and eighth grades, moving instruction from rote calculation to a problem-solving curriculum. By 1989-90, all seventh and eighth grade classes were grouped heterogeneously. Frick had become a state demonstration site for new approaches in math instruction.

The curriculum changes were significant. "We designed multiple entrance points on a concept, providing four to five lessons with different perspectives," explains Richard Compton, chair of the math department. "We also touch on basic foundation points every day in order to counteract student absenteeism." All teachers use cooperative learning. The new state framework, like the NCTM standards, "throws out a lot of garbage" that had become embedded in algebra, Compton says.

Frick teachers feel rewarded for their decisions. By the ninth grade, one-half of their students are now in some kind of algebra class. In the 1989-90 school year, 82 percent of Frick graduates enrolled in Algebra I in high school. High school teachers report that Frick students "are consistently their best prepared students."

The Frick staff accomplished this major de-tracking effort without a full complement of qualified teachers. Not until the 1990-91 school year were all students being taught by a certified math teacher. An extension grant from the state education department will keep the Frick effort growing, but Compton fears the problems faced by the school – the extreme poverty of the neighborhood and the overwhelming needs of students – will discourage other good teachers from coming to Frick.

After three years of attempting to move toward high-content math for all students, the Frick staff made these observations:

• **Traditional textbooks do not work with heterogeneous classrooms**; none were issued in the 1990-91 school year.

• **Mixed-ability classes need multiple-level lessons**, not those designed for one level only.

• **Instructional goals need to change**, with teachers accepting the premise that all students will not get the same from all lessons. Students need to use various means to arrive at understanding – writing, drawing, and designing as well as computing. Flexibility is the key.

• **Cooperative learning fits hand in glove with heterogeneous classrooms**, preventing regrouping of students by ability level within classrooms.

• **Homework must change**, too. Frick teachers are now using problems of the week, portfolios, writing assignments, drawing, and other alternatives. Students, it turns out, are slower to accept these changes than teachers, but those who complete the homework are getting more from it than students would have three years ago.

• **Assessment needs to be rethought**. Students who work together every day in class should not be assessed individually.

• **Classrooms are noisier and more active**. Without more interesting and multi-level lessons, this can lead to management problems; but the blame is in the deficiencies of the curriculum, not the students' behavior.

The teachers believe they are moving in the right direction. What they are doing will not solve all of the problems of the students at Frick, but in a report on their progress, teachers contend that "a student who comes into a Frick classroom and wants to do mathematics, can. They get to explore, examine, create. They get to write, draw, calculate. They get to solve problems.... That clearly could not have been said five years ago."

A WORLD OF HIGH CONTENT

Iroquois Middle School sees high content every day, sprawled across an inner courtyard. It is in the form of an enormous wooden map of the world designed and built by the students, with some help from teachers. The project grew out of the school's Foxfire program, patterned after the highly successful oral history movement begun in the 1960s by English teacher Eliot Wigginton and his students in Rabun Gap, Georgia. Louisville is one of the few urban sites in the Foxfire network, with training made possible through Clark funds.

Cheri Lineweaver's social studies classes are always project-oriented, but her participation in the Foxfire idea meant she needed to "turn decisions over to students – I'm still working on being able to do that." Her students did not hesitate, however. They wanted to turn their experiences with visitors from other countries or community people who traveled abroad into something that "would help us remember." They decided to build a giant map.

"The students got on the phone and talked to carpenters and muralists to find out what they needed," Lineweaver remembers. With the help of the school's shop teacher, youngsters who had never touched a saw before learned to work a saber saw; they all learned to hammer and to paint, along with the social studies, map and math skills, and group consensus-building needed to finish the project. The students then planned a ceremony to dedicate the map, inviting city officials and others – a crowd appeared, including local TV media. Still not finished, the students wrote a handbook for others on how to carry out such a project. *(Continued on page 72.)*

Serena Pon is so petite that she sometimes sits on top of her desk to see students at the back of her math classroom at Roosevelt Junior High School in Oakland. By early spring she already had burned out four bulbs on an overhead projector because she uses it constantly, not only to make points accessible to those furthest away from her soft voice, but also because "I don't want to turn my back on the class."

SMALL VOICE, POWERFUL SUBJECT

Even though she has some classes she calls "squirrelly" and yelling in the hall outside her doorway constantly distracts from teaching, Pon does not need to worry too much about keeping her students' attention. She is a good teacher – a principal's dream – who admits that she demands "more than regular math teachers, but I want them to have the same education I had as a child." The schools she attended in nearby Marin County had elaborate facilities and all kinds of enrichment activities; she even taught there one year after graduating from the University of California/ Berkeley. For the past three years, Pon has chosen to be at run-down, highly disadvantaged Roosevelt because "it is a more interesting place to be."

Although all of her classes are for students in the English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) program, she does not compromise on content for them. Using the projector, she illustrates estimating by showing how she calculates their grades, putting the calculator on the overhead to demonstrate its functions. She teases students into making the transition to algebraic thought. She writes out explanations on the projector, then asks them to fill in the math symbols for such terms as power, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction. Homework papers also go up on the screen, allowing her to point out to everyone the common mistakes they are making. Her students stay alert because everyone is called upon during class. Part of a good education, she says, "is to train yourself to ask good questions. You need to know content to do that."

The students also know it is all right in Pon's class to make mistakes. She tells them that learning math is like studying a musical instrument – she plays the piano – "mistakes will iron out after you practice long enough." She never gives a test, though, until she is sure everyone can pass it.

Pon's undergraduate work combined secondary English and math. She chose to teach math "because it is more powerful, more respected of the two disciplines," but language is still an important part of her teaching. "We should be surrounding children with math language," she says. "They should read and write about math as much as about any other subject." In Pon's classes, that is what happens through a very specific process she has worked out. Students brainstorm questions about a mathematical object, shape, or concept – a polygon, for example – or the use of

calculators in class. She writes the questions on the board, then asks the students to cluster them into central ideas represented by symbols. They work with the symbols, giving them priority or some kind of logic, then answer the questions. Their writing follows a form, with paragraphs and a title, then they draw a concrete representation of what they have just written about.

Serena Pon teaches math to English-as-a-Second Language students at Roosevelt. She emphasizes problem solving through the use of language.

Pon wants to encourage conversation and ease with language among her students because she believes "they all have a good chance to succeed, to go to college, but they do not see themselves in that role, they do not talk about such things at home." Her students are exempted from taking the new California math assessments. She thinks this sends the wrong message to them, because the tests emphasize what she does in her teaching – problem solving and the use of language. The tests should be standard for ESL students, she notes, so they will understand what is required of them.

Pon expresses firm opinions about the issue of "coverage" in math. She points out that other countries, including France, do not teach notation and formal fractions until eighth grade: "Our kids learn the rules on fractions in fourth grade, then repeat them over and over for the next four years." In the middle grades they still do not know them "because they became too discouraged too soon." She also faults the lack of consistency and evenly high standards and expectations for students. "You teach them sophisticated skills, but next year there is no follow-up. You're always starting over."

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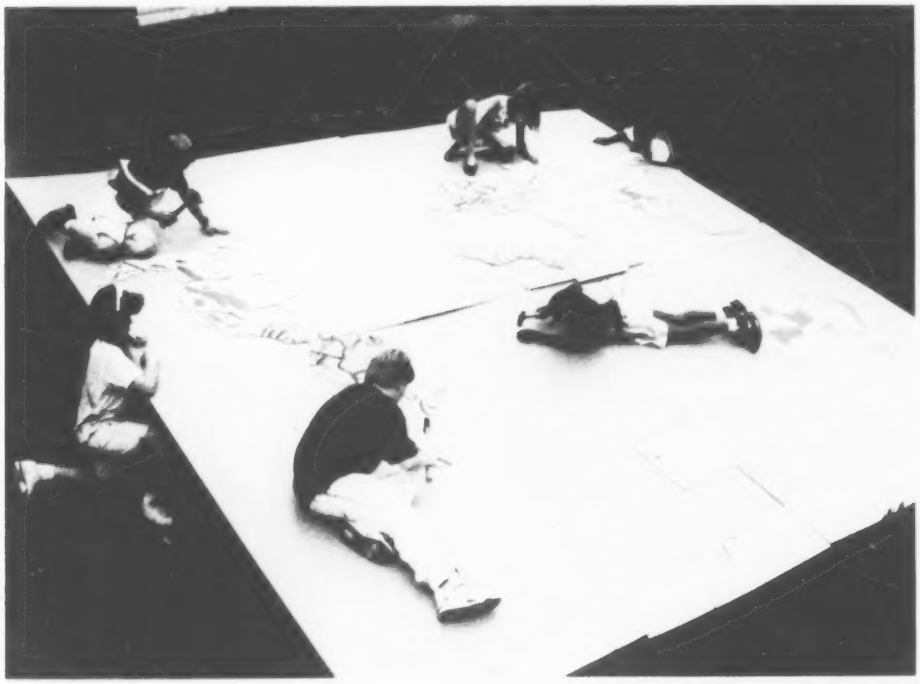
Below: Iroquois Foxfire students in Louisville built a world – from start to finish. Right: In San Diego, Mann's Gloria Farlee offers encouragement in a class for HOTS, a computer-enhanced curriculum that teaches students how to think.

"Last year, we just read out of a book. I hated social studies," says seventh-grader Lisa McFarland. "This year, it is my favorite subject. It would make school better if all classes were like this." She is particularly pleased that the whole school and community can see what her class accomplished. When they were designing and building the map, she says, "everyone had opinions, and that made the project more interesting because we had lots of ideas, instead of just one if we had been by ourselves."



WARMING UP TO HOTS

Developing more elaborate language skills among disadvantaged urban youth is the heart of another program the Clark schools found appropriate as a starting point for high content. This is the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) program, developed over an eight-year period by Stanley Pogrow of the University of Arizona.

HOTS is more of a process to obtain high content than a subject matter itself. It replaces traditional remedial Chapter I instruction and is presented ideally 35 minutes a day for at least four days a week over two years. HOTS uses computers to aim at general thinking activities, giving students "ownership" over a process of "learning how to understand." Not until they understand strategies and rationales can their

thought patterns become automated, a prerequisite, in Pogrow's opinion, for being able to do well in high-content academic work. Using sophisticated vocabulary, the program depends, first, upon well-trained teachers; and, second, upon opportunities to use computers creatively.

After only a few months of operation, the HOTS laboratories at Mann Middle School in San Diego won the support of faculty. A counselor told principal Julie Elliott that when he needs a boost, "I go sit in the HOTS lab!" In the classes at Mann, average reading scores showed a two-year increase after eight months of HOTS. At Muirlands Middle School, where HOTS was introduced in the 1989-90 school year, the grade-point averages of disadvantaged students indicated they "started to turn the corner, a year and a half into the program," says Pogrow. A social studies teacher was surprised that one of his star students, whom he thought was in "regular" classes, was a second-year HOTS student.

Pogrow's program reasons that disadvantaged students do not understand "understanding." Even the best curriculum and most exemplary teachers cannot make successful learners out of students who have no experience in dealing with unstructured types of learning, with generalizations, or with ambiguity. They look upon each piece of information as a discrete bit, he says: "They simply do not know how to work with ideas." This shows up dramatically after third grade when the curriculum becomes more complex.

The problem is not with their intellect or socio-economic standing, Pogrow believes. Rather, "it probably results from the adults in their lives not modeling the thinking processes for them," such as sophisticated conversations both at school or at the dinner table. No one asks the students to explain ideas.

In Gloria Farlee's HOTS lab at Mann, students explore the word "manifesto." They decide it means what kings and queens require of subjects, such as Columbus' orders. They then work on computers, individually or in groups with their own assignments – that is, their own manifestos or requirements – such as finding their weight in diamonds or drawing *(Continued on page 75.)*

Confronting the problem of incremental, patchwork change, the Project to Develop an Accelerated Middle School says schools first must have a "unity of purpose" before they can tackle higher content. Henry Levin of Stanford University developed his ideas on accelerated elementary schools for disadvantaged children to counteract individual efforts that achieved little in the long run. The "givens" of an

accelerated school are high expectations and high content – with efforts focused on curriculum, instruction, and organization.

Levin has only recently begun to apply his ideas to middle schools and is not working directly with any of the five Clark districts. Nevertheless, his comparison of curricula in an accelerated middle school to that of a conventional one is useful.

CONVENTIONAL	ACCELERATED
Remediation in basic skills	Enriched approach
Stress on factual knowledge	Critical thinking; social skills
Concepts in the abstract	Current, real work situations; personal experience and community resources; application of concepts to concrete problem-solving issues
Disciplinary focus	Language across the curriculum; interdisciplinary approach
Remedial track courses	Common curricular objectives
Core subjects only	Full range of elective coursework, including the arts, career information, and physical education
Limited access to extra-curriculars	Universal access to extra-curricular activities

The examples Levin provides for carrying out such curricular reform depend upon stimulating language and experiential opportunities, with students' studies tied to real-life situations and an emphasis upon allowing young adolescents to explore the "why" of curriculum as well as the "what." The overall aim, he says, is to give youngsters this age something to say "yes" to.

a perfect 88 in certain colors. Farlee gives no answers, but lots of positive feedback. "Good answer," she tells a student. "Everyone is working well," she tells the group. Students move around the room quietly, always occupied with what they are doing. Farlee, who spent 20 years as a special education teacher, is delighted with the HOTS lab. "There are no discipline problems here," she says, "because the kids enjoy the class so much." A poster with stars by each name indicates every student is making good progress.

Mann has two HOTS labs and plans to add a third, as well as become a Comprehensive HOTS Transition Model (several other Clark schools also will be demonstration sites). This model will take HOTS into a large-scale effort, providing two years of HOTS programming, followed by one or two years in a high-content math and/or science curriculum for all students in schools with a schoolwide Chapter I program.

Pogrow is more than critical about most high-content efforts; he is absolutely blunt about the paucity of resources available for urban disadvantaged schools. Most of the best resources, he says, develop outside of the "establishment," but that makes it hard to get them into the mainstream. An American publisher, for example, planned to publish a watered-down version of SciencePlus, a Canadian curriculum considered by Pogrow to be one of the few high content programs available for middle grades students. It took some persuasion to prevent major changes for the market in this country, according to Pogrow. Large-scale packaging of successful programs such as HOTS is necessary, he believes, because "we have made a terrible mistake by thinking that philosophy will change methodology." Educators have little experience in understanding what "thinking" means, so exhortations based on philosophy, such as rhetorical discussions about de-tracking, need to be backed up by readily available methods, he says.

Another researcher working with the Clark schools makes the same point. Jim McPartland of Johns Hopkins says that teachers' attitudes are important, but "changing minds isn't enough. We have to change practices and organizations as well." The various research-based methods pursued by the university faculty with West Baltimore and Calverton Middle Schools are creating a blueprint, according to McPartland, "with detailed plans and materials for building new support systems and organizational structures, and for rebuilding the curriculum."

rban middle schools learn a well-kept secret –

the more they reach out to parents and communities,

the stronger all become. . .

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Over and over again, urban school teachers and principals will point with their hands, or their words, to the streets outside the school, drawing pictures of poverty and dysfunction that envelop the students they teach. Many urban schools continue to act like day-time fortresses trying to seal themselves against the hordes of problems outside.

True, schools cannot get away from the reflection of the neighborhoods around them. However, it is specious to argue that schools can do little for young people until the

economic and social conditions affecting their families improve. In fact, the Clark project assumes parents and communities are assets, that their lack of involvement in needy urban middle schools stems more from never being approached to help in the right ways.

The assumption is correct. *Parents* in the five Clark cities are showing that, with a little creative help, they will actively side with the schools on creating better chances for their children. The *communities* are discovering they have substantial resources to offer schools willing to let the bridges down. In fact, schools have the power to empower. If they use their resources wisely and with sensitivity, they can help parents and neighborhoods discover their own strengths.

When the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) established a project to bring parents into the life of a middle school in a poor Baltimore neighborhood, it thought in terms of a school center for social activities, parenting education, and advocacy by parents. The organizers coped with a lot of leftover potato salad before they understood the problems faced by parents. According to an evaluation, the project "underestimated the deep suspicion parents held about large public meetings; parents' intimidation in dealing with educational authorities; the severe health and poverty burdens that parents experience which interfere with their ability to organize around education." The NCCE project, started before the Clark initiative in Baltimore, turned into one targeted at multiple support services for a small nucleus of parents. Only when the voiced needs of parents were met could they "mobilize around education as part of their families' needs."

This parent empowerment model developed in some Clark sites, particularly Milwaukee and San Diego. But, interestingly, the two Clark schools in Baltimore, with parents and neighborhoods similar to the NCCE school, chose a different answer to involving parents in educational goals. They enticed them into doing homework.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES

TIPS – Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork – is a joint project of Johns Hopkins University researchers and the Fund for Educational Excellence in Baltimore. When the Fund asked Baltimore schools to submit proposals for school improvement, "none of them had ideas that involved parents," says Jerry Baum, Fund president. Working with a small group of schools, the Fund learned from surveys of parents that they wanted to help their children and held good opinions of the schools "except when their children's performance was not good."

With Clark funds, teachers and university faculty worked over the summer to write homework assignments in sixth-grade science/health and language arts for students and parents to do together. The

assignments require no extra materials other than those usually found around homes.

A science assignment might ask families to take temperature readings in different rooms and compare notes. Recipes might illustrate science concepts. A health assignment encourages parents and their children to discuss views about sex. One chronology study, "Memories of Me," required students to ask a family member for "five memories they have of you and how old you were when they occurred." Students recorded the memories, put them in chronological order, and wrote a paragraph about them, with a title.

"The health topics, especially those about sex, drugs, and AIDS, give parents an opportunity to open up communication with their children," says Vivian Jackson, a retired principal who is program coordinator at the Fund for the TIPS project. Initial response to the project delighted teachers and Jackson – about 85 percent of the homework assignments were being turned in. They slacked off later, and some science assignments were obviously too difficult, but the constant watchful eye of researchers keeps the modifications going. In the summer of 1991, teachers rewrote some assignments and extended the project to the seventh grade.

Retired principal Vivian Jackson works with Baltimore youngsters on homework that they've done with their parents.

In Jackson's opinion, teachers benefit as much as parents from TIPS, learning

especially that they can make meaningful connections with their students' homes. Many are surprised at the response. "I didn't know parents would pay attention to something like this," is a frequent comment from teachers. Moreover, Jackson says, teachers gain a better idea about how well students comprehend the material: "Because students have to apply knowledge in the homework assignments, instead of just do busy work, the assignments provide real feedback." When a number of students in a class fail to understand the work, teachers reteach the material.

What about situations where the family cannot participate? Teachers handle these individually. Some help the students themselves after school; at both schools, after-hours homework centers give students an opportunity to work with volunteer teachers. Students can also work with an older sibling on the assignments if a parent is not available.

Traditionally, Jackson says, "teachers and administrators in middle schools have thought parents do not want to be involved, nor do their children want them. That isn't true." The comments of parents and students would seem to agree. Children like hearing their parents talk about "when I was in school"; parents say they are brushing up on their own skills. The first year's evaluation covered assignments turned in and amount of parent involvement; the second year, Jackson and the university researchers will assess the effects upon student achievement.

EMPOWERMENT IN MILWAUKEE

The Greater Milwaukee Education Trust's philosophy about parent involvement in schools shows up in the name it gave its effort – the Empowerment Project. Knocking on the doors of families attending Parkman or Kosciuszko Middle Schools in the summer of 1990, two parent coordinators contacted hundreds of parents to encourage them to get to know the school and the teachers. Parent involvement at the schools *did* improve. More turned out for conferences, for parent group meetings, and other activities. However, the Trust shifted its focus in mid-year because its methods were not getting to the heart of the schools' problems – high absenteeism and low achievement.

Rob Doucette, former coordinator of the Trust's project, explains: "We decided we would develop a model project where parents and teachers had to work together in order to achieve common student educational goals." The High Expectations Project uses contracts among teachers, students, and parents to achieve specific improvements. The contracts stipulate certain progress in grade point averages, attendance, and the quality of the education program. "There is nothing new or radical in this approach," *(Continued on page 82.)*

In the spring of 1991, only three of 17 eighth-grade teachers at Parkman Middle School in Milwaukee were permanent. Students had to cope with 14 substitute teachers. "Parents did not want their children taught this way," Shirley Owens says emphatically. As the parent coordinator at Parkman, Owens helped mobilize families to protest. They petitioned the school board, then demanded and received a

hearing. In September 1991, all eighth-grade teachers except one were on the permanent staff.

Owens' hard work had paid off. Such a protest by parents might not have occurred before she arrived in the Parkman community, hired by the Empowerment Project of the Greater Milwaukee Trust to encourage parent involvement at the all-minority school. She started in the summer of 1990 almost from ground zero – with families who ordinarily heard from the school only when there were problems. Knocking on 40 to 50 doors a day, Owens surprised most of the parents. "They wondered why I was there before school started and their child hadn't done anything bad yet," she says. Her message: "I want you to be more involved with your child's education. Don't wait for the school; get started now." She diplomatically gave advice on what parents could do at home. "These people have been raising their child for 13 years," she points out. "If I go too heavy on parent education, they will get their old feelings of intimidation."

Owens persisted and doubled the number of parents coming into the school. She coaxed them into helping her make calls to other parents and to check up on absentees. Parkman's parent organization was reactivated and parents and teachers sat down together to talk as equals. Parents learned why teachers were frustrated by rule-breaking. Teachers learned why some students were acting out in class. For example, Owens says, tardiness happens often in the Parkman neighborhood because students must dodge gang activity as they walk to school.

All but a handful of teachers at Parkman are white, and Owens' efforts for bringing teachers and parents together are as much about cultural awareness as anything else. Black children tend to verbally jostle with each other in strong language, she explains. "If you don't understand this, you see the interaction as abusive behavior." When students are suspended for such behavior, she says, "parents ask, 'Is that all there is to the problem?' "

At Kosciuszko, Owens' colleague Daisy Cubias is doing similar work with teachers and families in a school which has become a bilingual center. Neither group was communicating well with each other. Owens and Cubias exchange ideas and plan together. Both are continuing to organize the High Expectation Project. Both are

Parkman's Shirley Owens, with new principal Kenneth Holt, counters parents' expectation that the school *only* calls when their youngsters have done something bad.

working on "Friends" activities in each neighborhood, gathering support from businesses and other groups, which are now offering tutors, mentors, job shadowing, and in-kind contributions to each school.

Owens is also starting a sister-to-sister program at Parkman with special mother-daughter get-aways and mentoring especially for girls. She and Cubias find themselves serving families as much as students, connecting them to social services they need, even finding winter clothes for students. "They need so much," she says, "that sometimes it is overwhelming."

She is delighted, however, with the progress at Parkman in only 18 months of the project. Educated at the University of Wisconsin in community organizing, Owens believes personal, sincere contact with parents makes a big difference. "They want the best for their children," she affirms, "but in the past they may not have known how to get it, and that is changing."

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according to Doucette, "except that we were able to develop new enthusiasm and commitments among the stakeholders."

This was not a snap. "Teachers immediately thought the project meant additional work for them," he recalls, and schools were reluctant to share certain information, such as absenteeism statistics, with "outsiders." It took three meetings to "work through the tension," he says, but in the end parent, teacher, and student attitudes have changed. In the past, it had taken a week for parents to be notified of absenteeism, but the project staff set up a procedure to get the absentee information from teachers and start making calls by mid-morning each day. Students now receive awards for meeting weekly attendance and academic goals; the contracts are reviewed each month in personal visits with parents.

In the pilot classes, 50 percent of the students achieved a 95 percent or better attendance record for the grading period covered by the contract; 50 percent had perfect attendance; 50 percent improved their grade-point averages; teachers felt better about student attitude and effort; parents felt better about working with the school; and student enthusiasm for school and attendance increased.

The Trust's parent coordinators also plan monthly activities. In the month when graduating middle school students select high schools, the coordinators helped parents with choices and applications. After a gang surrounded a school bus at Kosciuszko in a frightening confrontation, parents met to discuss the incident, then decided on ways to improve security at the school. Because of the home visits, the parent coordinators "learned that parents did not know how to read report cards," says Doucette. Now, parents receive training from the coordinators.

"A lot of school people do not want parent involvement," Doucette acknowledges. But the Empowerment Project overcame that by pulling enough parents and teachers together and "working through the problems." He believes this is a "credible" way to go about creating change, "not through workshops but by working your tail off forming healthy relationships."

Standing as a bridge between schools and families, Doucette sees "how deeply parents care about their children and how deeply teachers want the best for students. Both intuitively know they can't do it alone, but neither has a credible clue about how to step toward each other."

INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES IN SAN DIEGO

Across the country in San Diego, a Home-School Partnership Collaboration is stepping out in a number of directions. The project, sponsored by the June Burnett Institute of the San Diego State University Foundation, first persuaded seven community agencies to join in efforts to inform and

empower parents. The agencies represent the major languages and cultures of students attending the two network schools in San Diego, as well as traditional groups such as the PTA and Junior League. Once organized, the collaboration became a hub for a variety of activities, some tailored to the needs of particular groups, others meant for all parents at the two Clark schools.

Parents from different cultures "only have their emotions to negotiate with in the schools," comments John Wedemeyer, director of the June Burnett Institute. "We are trying to give them better skills." Just as important, he adds, parents can help teachers deal with the diversity in their classrooms by explaining their family culture.

Initially, each group contacted its own constituency. The Union of Pan Asian Communities, for example, tried home gatherings as well as large meetings with more than 300 families, learning that the smaller settings were more popular with their parents. When a 14-year-old Vietnamese boy who was a student at Mann Middle School was murdered in a street fight, the Union helped the school organize a meeting for Vietnamese families to share their grief with the family. "Because the project is in place, we can be there to create opportunities for communication," points out Susan Hasakawa, representing the Union.

Schools "need to make an incredible effort" to reach South Asian families, she says. The male population of Cambodian families, for example, was decimated by war, and the heads of households, many of them women, "are still in shock."

A second phase of the project provided leadership training for parents, and almost 350 attended the first round sponsored by individual agencies. The Chicano Federation's six-week sessions, as an example, helped parents understand the structure of the school system, leadership concepts, communication skills for such occasions as PTA meetings, how to interpret report cards, special education, and parents' and students' rights. "We fashioned the training programs according to what parents wanted," says Rosa Marie Alonzo, the Federation's coordinator for the project. New immigrants were more interested in how education could lead to jobs; Hispanics who had been living here for awhile were most concerned about discrimination.

To kick off advanced training for parents, the Institute sponsored an all-day workshop for parents from all constituencies served by the agencies – in three languages – with the theme in celebration of pluralism. Parents enjoyed being part of a larger group, even though they had to cope with simultaneous translations of 12 speakers, Wedemeyer observed.

He admits that teachers and administrators are "much more focused on students and on their school sites. It is hard for them to expand and include even parents, much less community *(Continued on page 86.)*

More than 200 students from San Diego's Logan Barrio meet their buses at 6:30 a.m. and head for Muirlands Middle School in La Jolla. Blanca Robles is not far behind them. She is Muirlands' parent coordinator, a go-between for Hispanic students and families and the teachers and a school much more distant to them than a cross-town trip.

CROSS TOWN, CROSS CULTURE

Muirlands has participated in the voluntary busing plan for more than a decade and used part-time parent coordinators every once in awhile. Robles, however, is the first one especially trained for the job. She was already a volunteer at the school, then received training to become a paid coordinator by the Chicano Federation, one of the agencies participating in the June Burnett Institute collaboration.

Barrio parents send their children to Muirlands, she says, because they believe the school is safe and the education program superior to neighborhood schools. But everyone pays a price. Their children have achievement problems at Muirlands, the most academically demanding middle school in the district. This, plus being "outsiders" to the neighborhood culture, create behavior problems. Parents not only have difficulty coming to the school, but once there, "they are embarrassed because their English is not good," Robles says.

With her own small, cheerful office at Muirlands, Robles counsels students, sits in as a translator at parent-teacher conferences, and mingles with the students in hallways and lunchroom. But half of her work takes place back in the barrio where Robles helps organize meetings for her Muirlands parents at a local school, calls parents about problems, and answers their questions and concerns.

After Robles came on board, a few barrio students were selected for the first time to participate in the school's annual trip to Washington, D.C. Classmates sold candy to help finance them, and Robles organized a Cinco de Mayo lunch, prepared by barrio parents, for faculty and neighborhood parents as a way to raise funds. Such activities are time-consuming but easier than some of the other tasks Robles has assumed. Sometimes barrio parents are unhappy because of perceived discrimination against their children by teachers, she says, but she is able to discuss the situation with the principal. Robles worked closely with principal Allen Peck in setting up her program and points out that he would analyze complaints from barrio parents and discuss them with teachers when he felt it necessary.

Such an intervention would not have taken place before Robles became parent coordinator. "Parents feel better because I am here," she says. "I am receiving more and more calls to explain what is going on." And she has persuaded more parents to become involved. She is organizing a group of parents to sponsor coffee meetings in

Muirlands parent coordinator Blanca Robles counsels barrio students and organizes meetings for their parents.

their homes and is searching for parent education materials in Spanish. "Parents want to be involved," she insists, "but they don't know how, and they were not comfortable at Muirlands before." With a new vice principal who speaks Spanish and with Robles, much more communication is taking place.

Born in Guadalajara and a resident of Mexico until she married, Robles became a school volunteer when her oldest child entered kindergarten, even though she knew little English. She has never stopped. "If the school people got angry with me because I was too pushy, I didn't care," she says emphatically. "These are *my* children."

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agencies." Tomi Onibuwe-Johnson, the collaboration's project coordinator, is more succinct: "Both teachers and parents have the same needs, but they need help recognizing that."

The Institute staff is now spending time every week at each school organizing parents as resources for different language groups. Activities include parents who guide new families around the sprawling five-building complex at Mann Middle School.

ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE IN LOUISVILLE

Schools often get parents in for "negative" reasons. Western Middle School in Louisville, on the other hand, is drawing them in for positive experiences that everyone agrees are emotional moments none will ever forget. "They are real tear-jerkers," says principal Ron Barber, slightly embarrassed by his own sentiments.

The majority of Western's families live below the poverty line – long-time, demoralizing poverty of Appalachian white and southern black legacies. Parents' and grandparents' experiences in school alienated many of them, and their attitudes passed down through generations. Traditional activities for parents had been poorly attended. As a schoolwide Chapter I site, Western could explore various options; one they chose was to appoint a parent coordinator, Wendy Anderson.

With the faculty, Anderson worked out a new way to involve parents: the Falcon Awards. Western is divided into seven teams, and each month they nominate two students to receive awards for progress in school and/or good citizenship; in addition, students write essays about their parents, and one parent is selected from each team to be honored. Anderson is on the phone constantly, persuading each family to come to the Falcon Awards ceremony.

When the first Falcon Awards took place in November 1990, Anderson was nervous because "parents usually do not turn up." But the library overflowed with family members. The school makes each ceremony very special – parents receive corsages and certificates, teachers talk about the students being honored, and a speaker from the community provides a pep talk. Local businesses donate food for lunch.

The most memorable part of the ceremony comes when students read their essays about their parents. "I've cried a couple of times," Anderson admits. "I try not to, but it is too hard." Although Western always sponsored traditional parent activities, "the parents who come to the Falcon Awards act as if this is the first time the school ever recognized they were there," she says.

Because generations from the Western neighborhood have passed down embedded attitudes about the school, Anderson believes it is especially important to get parents into the schools "so they can see that

At Western's Falcon Awards, both students and parents in Louisville are honorees. Youngsters read essays about their parents, and it is not uncommon to see tears of appreciation.

things are different. They think it is still like it was 40 years ago." She sees genuine change because of the awards program – not only are parents feeling good about what the school offers, but some of the honorees are now volunteering in her program. Most important, student achievement and attendance are improving.

TAPPING INTO THE COMMUNITY

Each of the five districts is drawing upon community resources to help reach the schools' objectives. Milwaukee and Baltimore depend upon local community funds and trusts to mobilize resources. San Diego is working with the June Burnett Institute to bring about collaborations. In Oakland, the Interface Institute and Oakland School Volunteers (see Chapter 7) are supporting middle school reforms with direct services to teachers and students.

In Louisville, the project benefits from two community resources. In turn, their relationships with the schools have changed the way they view and relate to school improvement efforts.

One is Third Century, a downtown organization of about 300 businesspeople, residents, professionals – people who live and work in the urban area of the city. Its goal is to improve the quality of life in downtown Louisville, but until it became involved with the schools, its work had been more that of "cheerleaders, event sponsors – the street fair and banners stuff," says Steven Eggers, an architect and former chair of the group's education committee.

Its project with the three Louisville schools, brought about on the suggestion of central office administrator Howard Hardin, has become a long-term concern. Rather than special events, Third Century now sponsors programs directed at improving both the work force and the schools.

"We decided we wanted to bring teachers and students out of the schools and show them what is going on in the city's businesses, where the job market is headed," Eggers explains. Teachers were invited to attend evening sessions at which Third Century leaders talked about workplace issues. This led to an all-day session for teachers during which they visited architecture, banking, and law offices. "They found out that what is being taught in schools is not what is needed at jobs," Eggers recalls. "We all depend on much more sophisticated skills."

For the students, Third Century sponsored a Job Introduction Day, exposing students from the three Louisville project schools to seven job categories. Students then participated in job shadowing. At the end of the year, both teachers and students received awards for *(Continued on page 90.)*

Ron Barber is unflappable. Probably the most experienced school principal among the 12 project schools – he previously was director of middle schools in the Jefferson County central office – he came to Western especially to direct change-around efforts under the Clark initiative.

Barber managed Western's organization into a schoolwide Chapter I site; its

integration of resources such as HOTS and the Algebra Project; and a total change in philosophy – all while major remodeling of the school was taking place. He also kept a focus on improving the inescapable link between his school and his families.

"Parents send us the best they have. They are not keeping the good ones locked up in a closet," Barber says bluntly. There is a tendency "to wring hands" in schools with large concentrations of disadvantaged youth, but "it is my responsibility as a leader to find solutions." If his teachers are to know at the end of the day that they have had a positive impact on their students, Barber needs the help of families and the community.

"What teachers need most to succeed with students," he says, "is a different climate in which to work. They get tired of being threatened, of insubordination of their students, of profanity." Students come to school with these hostilities, he says, but few outside of the school acknowledge the affect upon teachers. Nor do they understand how much teachers need to be recognized. "We'd kill for a plate of Toll House cookies," Barber sighs. "We already have these doubts about ourselves – just like everyone else – and then we get all these negatives."

Communities, Barber says, must find ways "to keep good teachers in the schools where they are needed the most." Successful businesses do not let their top salesmen go. But, he points out, good teachers "will not stay around a place where kids put each other down and parents threaten them." Despite a staff he considers warm and professional, he still has "teachers who go home in tears."

Barber wants Western to become known for its state-of-the-art training of teachers, an opportunity offered by the resources of the Clark project. "There are teachers out there who are experienced and feel they are not being challenged anymore. They would be willing to step into a tough school, if they have good support," he predicts.

Barber believes parents and their attitudes will be the deciding factors. It is up to them to make the school inviting to good teachers. "A critical issue for Western," he says, "is whether it can create a climate that will attract and keep talented teachers, or will it become a place where a teacher comes in and waits for seniority in order to get out?"

Western's principal Ron Barber believes parents can help create a climate to keep the best teachers from moving on.

participating. Students invited the businesspeople to the schools, where they were given awards.

Modifying the initiative in the second year, the Third Century planners combined activities so that teachers and students now participate together. They also broadened job shadowing, aiming to have every eighth-grader – more than 300 students – participate. About 25 businesses are involved. This required hiring a part-time coordinator – the project became too big for volunteers, Eggers notes.

He believes it is important for youngsters in the middle grades to be exposed "to reasons why they are in school. Classes can become such a drudgery, but in this program they see how math is applied, for example. That gives a whole new spin to learning." Schools have to provide role models that may be missing in the lives of the students, Eggers says. "That may be an unfair burden, but schools are the last resort for many of them. And we are going to be only as good a country as these kids."

The project schools in Louisville also sought to start a mutually beneficial relationship with the University of Louisville, the major teacher training institution in the area. The schools and the School of Education decided to work together on developing an urban studies curriculum – interdisciplinary units that would be shared among the schools after being pilot-tested at one site. Southern Middle School teachers developed a unit on money, piloted in the spring of 1990. However, other schools did not use the curriculum or develop their own units. Such a project, university faculty concluded, may not be very transferrable – teachers in each school need to develop their own ideas and teamwork.

Robert Ronau, math specialist at the university's School of Education, believes the early attempts to work together ran into trouble because the two bureaucracies – schools and university – "are entirely different." Teachers and principals feel, "We gotta know you before we'll ask you to join the party." But university people feel they are the experts. "We have to learn how to work together," he says, especially because the curriculum in urban schools needs an infusion of new ideas.

To their credit, school and university faculty sat down together to work out the problems and reshape the contributions of the university to the schools. A faculty member will work with each of the three Louisville schools in the 1991-92 school year, attending meetings and being on call to help teachers with curriculum issues and changes. Each school chose areas of interest – cooperative learning, high content in math, clinical supervision, writing, science – and faculty members were matched with the interests.

Ronau believes the revised relationship is more on target. "Teachers themselves have to find ways to enlighten their profes-

sion, and schools need to build a critical mass willing to try."

HELPING HANDS

The Clark project focused on finding and encouraging leadership among teachers. After a year's experience, a major neglect emerged – principals needed support also, especially on the gritty problem of how to balance the day-to-day demands of their urban schools with the need to create new educational visions for their students. The principals needed time to talk to each other.

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education provided two workshops in the 1990-91 school year for the 12 principals. More useful than the formal program was the reaching out that occurred among the principals, given a few days away from the constant tension of their jobs and time to reflect on their team-building skills. As NFIE consultant Don Rollie pointed out, "The 12 principals represent almost the complete span of the continuum, from the 'autocrat' to the 'abdicrat,' but all are struggling to find the right combination of skill and style to fit their individual situation."

At one of the workshops, the principals tackled the planning process, analyzing why plans fail. They cited lack of commitment to reform, neglect of mutual decision-making, and insufficient follow through as reasons for failure. All of them had run up against these problems – in their faculty and in their own leadership – as they tried to implement the Clark initiative.

The strategies to prevent failure? In addition to the importance of getting all parties to agree on the overall problems and solutions, they cited the need to broaden faculty participation in rewriting plans when it is necessary, set timelines, gather research and connect it to the school's vision, and collect follow-up data. "Go to the end result wanted and plan backwards" was one of the principals' suggestions.

The discussions were so stimulating that the principals decided to write up what they were learning about leadership and share it. Unfortunately, by the end of the school year, half of the principals attending the first workshop had moved on. Nevertheless, of those still with the schools, a conversation with any of them reveals their feeling of belonging to a strong network. They talk about each other's ideas. As Julie Elliott at Mann Middle School in San Diego explains, "If I've had a bad day, I can call up Lynn [Lynn Dodd, principal at King Estates in Oakland] and let it all out."

Itimately, it is the students

who will say if the changes are working. . .

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Risking change, the adults and young people in these 12 middle schools are beginning to believe in themselves. This is not to say that their daily struggle to be respectful and respected has eased very much, or that student achievement scores are remarkably improved, or that teachers are 100 percent behind a renewed professionalism. Evidence is building, however, that the project's commitment to rebuilding urban middle schools around high standards is very good for the students in them.

SEEING RESULTS

Evaluators are keeping track of many indicators. Trend data on academic progress will not be available until later in the project, but surveys reveal some significant changes over two years, particularly in students' self-esteem and attitudes toward school. Students' perceptions of themselves have improved in areas such as scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, behavior, physical appearance, and global self-worth. In addition, student attitudes toward their teachers improved in a number of the Clark schools, and youngsters are beginning to understand better the link between their studies and their options in high school and beyond.

Another survey that measured critical thinking skills was completed for the first time in 1991. Although there is not yet a comparison year, the evaluators note that students in most of the Clark project schools scored better than the "norm" provided by the publisher. Considering the low achievement scores reported by the schools before the Clark project began, this is encouraging news.

In every school there are classrooms where students who "have always been surrounded by put-downs" are gaining self-confidence. Teachers accustomed to working in isolation are learning the skills of collaboration, as are their students. In many schools with advisory programs, teachers who never thought they could do more than teach their subject are learning to provide personal support to students. If teachers' greatest rewards come from seeing their students engaged in learning and feeling successful, then the Clark project's goals offer enormous hope.

At the end of two years, the most obvious proof is in the changes in students themselves.

GIVE THEM AN INCH

At Southern Middle School in Louisville, a stone's throw from Churchill Downs, English teacher Amy Blanchard found out that even her extraordinary empathy with the lives of the disadvantaged children in her classes did not prepare her for the emotions that poured out in Foxfire projects. Her students selected the topics they wanted to explore, even though she was a bit skeptical when one group chose "athletic shoes." But then they went to work on the subject. They surveyed *all* secondary students throughout the district, compiling information on such questions as, "Would you be friends with someone who doesn't wear expensive athletic shoes?" This led them to discussions and writings about peer pressure.

Another group selected child abuse, doing research about what it is and how prevalent. They wrote their own commentaries, including a play entitled, "No, Daddy, Please Don't" and prepared a pamphlet on child abuse and where to get help that was distributed to elementary schools. Blanchard's students have corresponded

Kelinia Johnson likes to sing, but her science classes at Southern have convinced her to consider being a doctor.

with prisoners; videotaped a court trial, then written a script to go with it. For a video accompanying the "shoe" project, students from another class wrote and performed rap music.

In Foxfire, students took on individual projects as well. Sixth-grader Kelinia Johnson accompanied her history of African-Americans in this country with songs from different periods. Sitting on a high stool with her skinny legs swinging in rhythm, Kelinia forgot her ordinary shyness and sang out "Amazing Grace," "We Shall Overcome," and other familiar music. In elementary school she wanted to be a singer, but math and science classes at Southern have persuaded her that perhaps she ought to be a pediatrician. She explains that it doesn't bother her to be called an "oreo" by some of her peers, because she and her close friends encourage each other. "The most important thing I am learning here is that if you want to do something, just do it. Don't let anything get in your way."

A SHOULDER TO LEAN ON

At Louisville's Western Middle School, young Jason was one of several students "who were giving teachers fits," says Chris Corbin, Chapter I coordinator. Now he talks about fishing and hunting and checks his temper. Jason has a mentor, one of eight retired school district executives who spend one hour a week with a student having problems. One of the mentors is a marathon runner who challenged his student, a heavy smoker, to run pre-races during the Kentucky Derby events. He ran all of them and later came up to Corbin and tried to recruit a mentor for a buddy. Another mentor has promised a full college scholarship to his student. The students are coming to school, their grades are improving and they have goals, says Corbin.

Other students at Western are doing the mentoring themselves. Once a week they walk over to a nearby elementary school and tutor first- and second-grade students who need help with reading. Carlos Adams, who signed up for the volunteer work "to get out of school," now makes sure he is never absent on tutoring days and gets

Before coming to Southern, Amy Blanchard's teaching experience was in a wealthy suburb of Louisville where the greatest problem was students who talked too loud. "Here, the disrespect drives me to tears sometimes," she says. But Blanchard, the mother of six children, has learned to not take students' behavior problems personally because she believes that, deep down, they want to be loved more than

IN APPRECIATION OF STUDENTS

they want to be rejected. She realizes that the process her students go through in Foxfire projects teaches more than English. "These kids live in a world where everything is shouted at them," she says. In Foxfire groups, they learn to negotiate, to work together. This is a strategy she always has used in teaching, but it takes on a richer meaning when students select their interests and produce something to share with others.

Drawing a large number of students from housing projects, Southern battles the effects of poverty constantly, including terribly damaged egos among its students. "I have some kids who literally will not pick up a pencil," says Blanchard, but she found out they will work at computers. Much of the writing by her students comes off computers, which also enables Blanchard to encourage redrafts. "They learn that to be a writer one does not have to be gifted; you just have to work hard."

In Louisville, Southern's Amy Blanchard weaves teaching skills with counseling ones.

Blanchard weaves teaching skills with counseling ones. In the spring of 1991, she described a class where many of her students experienced alcohol and drug abuse at home; 13-year-olds in the class had 27-year-old mothers. "And here I am, trying to teach them to write poetry," she says sadly. Despite such problems, Blanchard sees her students making progress because projects like Foxfire "give respect for what they know." The products students share – from a poem, to a play, to a video – "enlarge the audience and the rewards for what students are doing."

At the end of the year, Blanchard's class produced a Foxfire yearbook. In her introduction, Blanchard dedicated the book to her students: "Without them I am unnecessary. They have the power to build, create, give birth, and invent, just as they have the power to tear down, demolish, kill or reverse the accomplishments of others.... They are my inspiration, the fuel which keeps me going."

a heart tug out of the children who "run up to me and hug me." The tutors select books they think the children will like, or ones the children can read aloud. Being a student, too, the tutors can sometimes get the youngsters' attention easier than their teachers. Says tutor Nina Stallings: "They listen to me. They give me positive answers instead of smart ass."

At West Baltimore Middle School student tutors work inside the school, staffing the Wildcat Wisdom Center. Teachers recommend students to receive tutoring at the center; they spend a period in one-on-one help from peers once or twice a week. The tutees say they like this kind of help. "The tutors make it easier," says Tamra. "They explain things a lot better than teachers. The teacher has a lot of other students to help, but the tutors have time to work with me." Tutors are also learning from the experience. Walter, for example, has become more patient. Wayne is improving his "people skills."

ONE PROGRAM ZOOMS OFF THE CHARTS

At Parkman Middle School in Milwaukee, where student attendance sometimes runs below 70 percent, teachers can suddenly see what students are capable of doing academically. And how success creates excitement among impoverished students.

Karen Kahn taught the gifted and talented before she came to Parkman; even so, she did not know which side of the computer mouse was up when she agreed to take training for a Computer Curriculum Corporation instruction program. All of her remedial students began the year below the 39th percentile. At the end of the first year with the program, Kahn expected 40 of her 86 students to have made two-year gains in reading and math. They stand in line at lunchtime to get in the computer room; they come after school. Kahn created an environment in which "it is socially acceptable to be successful." The whole class cheers

when a student tops out – reaches the two-year gain point and an "A." The program monitors each student's progress closely, translated by Kahn into colorful posters with individual student gains posted on the wall.

BECOMING GOOD LISTENERS FOR STUDENTS

Milwaukee's Kosciuszko drew from its student-centered traditions to develop small advisory groups of 15-16 students each which meet daily. Not all teachers accepted TRUST (Time for Respect, Understanding, Support and Teamwork) willingly or with equal skill, but the staff stuck with the principle of giving students more personal contact with teachers, experimenting with the frequency and time of day for the advisory period. Patricia Treat, who prepares the advisory resources for eighth-grade teachers, blames lack of training for some reluctance, but is confident the problems will iron out.

TRUST resources – prepared counseling materials as well as hand-picked magazine and newspaper articles – delve into the things young adolescents talk about among themselves. "How can teens fight violence instead of each other?" is an article which students and teachers discuss together. Drugs, peer pressure, career ideas, gangs – these are decisions that Kozy students face outside of school and that TRUST tries to help them understand. "There are a lot of things we are trying to do which should be done at home," Treat admits, "but they are not getting it, so we need to do it."

Treat notices a genuine change in students whose advisors take this role seriously. "They are very open, not afraid to express opinions," Treat says, "and the teachers who opened themselves up to the possibilities of TRUST are learning a lot about their students."

Like faculty at the Mann Middle School in San Diego who get a lift from sitting in the HOTS lab, Kozy teachers need only

Zambia Frazier's pluck shows through. Shy and unsure of herself before she entered the seventh grade at Parkman, she nevertheless wanted very much to achieve. She noticed a TV ad about summer classes in reading skills at the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee for youngsters her age. She enrolled and rode a bus across town every day for six weeks of classes. Still the youngster entered the seventh grade

DETERMINED, DESPITE IT ALL

reading no better than a fifth-grade level.

Placed in Karen Kahn's computer-assisted program, Zambia never looked back on defeat. Learning confidence in math skills she did not realize she had, Zambia was the first student in the school to "top out" of the program, reaching a ninth-grade proficiency in math during the fourth grading period. She set a goal of reading 50 books the next summer and attending university classes again.

Looking far ahead, she wants to become an architect. But with a single mother and younger siblings, Zambia knows it will be difficult to keep going. Now that she is reading better, she finds stories and books "give me dreams" and believes her classmates would stick it out in school if they learned "how to get the main ideas" from what they read and started dreaming about them.

She would like to be a more typical teenager, playing outside with friends after school, but she stays inside, doing her homework and watching TV. "There are people dying on the streets everyday in my neighborhood," she says matter-of-factly and adds wistfully, "I would like to live someplace else."

In Milwaukee, Val Wiebeck gets Kozy students to think about career decisions before high school.

climb to the airy third floor of their building to see the potential of their students. Mary Galinowski, the school's art teacher, believes every young person at the school has talent: "They just don't use it. You have to pull it out of them." The hallways outside of her studio room are lined with remarkable self-portraits. Pop art colorfully decorates the room, and clay bird houses made by students show their humor and whimsy. Galinowski believes art can give Kozy's deprived students "a sense of themselves and of history." One of her students, from a Central American family of illegal immigrants, won $24,000 in art scholarships and wants to be an art teacher. A H'mong student won the Greater Milwaukee Women's Club Award – something Kozy students have garnered five years in a row. Two of her recent students, both minorities, won generous scholarships to the Milwaukee Art Institute.

On a floor below, a science teacher has found another turn-on button. Val Wieback, 20 years a teacher with 13 of them at Kozy, became more and more concerned about her students' lack of motivation. "We never used to have failing grades except by students who didn't come to school," she explains, "but in recent years we almost have to dance on the table to get them to do the work." With a small Carnegie Corporation grant, she tried out a career-linking program developed under the guidance of Nadya Fouad of the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee. After a year of trial and error, Wieback knew what it could accom-

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plish and how to organize it. Being part of the Clark project helped her expand it.

Wieback works with local businesses, but what makes her partnerships unusual is the amount of involvement by the businesses and the high content she wrings from the program for her students. Not to mention their enthusiasm for the experiences.

She began with a medical unit using the facilities of St. Luke's Hospital. Students came prepared. They had seen a video made by high school students on medical careers, decided on the questions they would ask, and listened to speakers from the hospital who came to the school. They toured the hospital, even donned surgical gowns for a visit to the surgery wing. "We had a fire drill after we got back to school," Wieback recalls, "and our kids trooped out in surgical garb. They created quite a stir. The trip was an obvious success."

The tours are in groups of about 14 students, who hold a "debriefing" session together back at the school. The next stage is shadowing of personnel at the hospital. Those who pair up with surgeons might witness knee surgery; in obstetrics, the students get to hold new-born babies.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield signed on, and Wieback and other teachers developed a unit on medical insurance (using earthquakes as the example). Tours of the insurance office include careers other than those in insurance, such as security and graphics (the hospital project also includes non-medical careers). Working with the engineering firm of Allen-Bradley, Wieback received support for a unit on robotics. Engineers from the firm helped her teach students to make electro-magnetic robotic arms, then they judged the finished pieces. The firm's president attended the school's Appreciation Day at the end of the year.

Wieback says she feels supported as a teacher because the community never turns her down. One nearby furniture company said "no" because, as she explains, "all they knew about our kids was that they left graffiti on their windows." But she persisted because students wanted to learn about interior design careers, and when the firm finally agreed, the students' visit lasted twice as long as scheduled.

The participation of community and business leaders in the school lives of Kozy's students is important, Wieback insists. High school is too late for career decisions because they enroll without knowing what courses to take. "I am like Mom and Dad – advice is in one ear and out the other – but if these successful people tell them what it takes to make it in jobs, they can hook them into seeing the link between school and the real world."

Career Linking means active learning before, during, and after the visits. Students do research on careers and prepare their questions; part of the follow-up, in addition to reports and projects, are the thank-you letters they write. One student wrote a vet-

Oakland's Interface Institute works with science teachers, such as Linden Richmond, to challenge students with high-content curriculum.

erinarian: "I really enjoyed following you and finding out more about your kind of work.... I learned more things than what I had know before about veterinarians and what they do.... I would love to go visit you again sometime if it would be possible. This was one of the best experiences of my life."

Wieback aimed for increased self-esteem and career awareness. What is happening to her eighth-grade students goes far beyond that. Their attendance is up, and their grade-point averages are improving. Before Career Linking began, most Kozy students settled for a local high school with poor academic performance. Now, more of them are selecting high schools with career magnets. "We know we are succeeding," says Wieback, "because we catch them talking about careers at lunch!" Career Linking now involves teachers from all of the eighth grade teams, with awareness projects beginning in the sixth grade and service careers and volunteer service scheduled for seventh graders.

PROVIDING THE EXTRAS

Science consultants to the Oakland schools found some committed teachers but uneven offerings and requirements. Students consider Linden Richmond at King Estates an excellent teacher, but as an example of the formidable barriers to high-

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quality instruction, he struggles to divide up only $225 a year for supplies among 15 science classes at his school. Richmond considers the help he is receiving from the Interface Institute "the only light in Oakland" for science teachers. Through Saturday workshops, several teachers are developing their own curriculum, such as units on energy, kinetics, and energy alternatives. Richmond, for example, rarely relies on textbooks anymore and is integrating California's new science framework into the King Estates program.

The Interface Institute also reaches students. About a dozen youngsters meet after school at Roosevelt Junior High for extra experiences in science; another 40 attend after-school classes at the Interface office. They find their way there usually because parents urge them to go. "They keep coming because they want to," says Ann Bouie Wilson, Interface's executive director. College students teach the sessions, mixing in some personal counseling and confidence-building for the students. Wilson says the lack of attention to science in Oakland's middle grades "borders on a moral issue. This is life with urban schools and with kids of color."

With parent support and information about resources, students try to make up for what they are not receiving. Eighth grader Janell Willis, a King Estates student, says the after-school work at Interface brought her grades up from a "D" to a "B" in science. Melvin Thomas, a seventh grader at Frick Junior High School, is now ahead in math because of the Interface program. They both agree that "some teachers have been teaching too long" and some students should not be in the school. Thomas describes trying to learn when burrito sauce is thrown on the ceiling and fights erupt constantly in the halls. He would "kick out all the drug dealers, wipe all the graffiti off the wall, and get better teachers." While Willis enjoys the science classes at Interface more than those at school, she realistically acknowledges that "school is what counts. That's what will be on our records."

Another project, the School Volunteers of Oakland, limits its work to one-on-one tutoring. It serves as an umbrella for the more than 75 groups in the Oakland community offering tutoring help for students.

Calverton Principal Frances Ellington in Baltimore is expanding "pockets" of change to the whole school.

Interface trains the tutors, and teachers are invited to the training sessions to encourage them to pick up new skills.

Bernice Brown, a Clorox executive, organized the effort, aided by a small group of volunteers. She found that schools are not organized to deal with outsiders, even though teachers and administrators often are eager for whatever support they can get. They fail to communicate or provide space for activities – not deliberately, but because they are tied to old ways of organization. Brown believes students would benefit greatly if their learning could move into the community, with lots of hands-on experiences at work sites, libraries, college campuses. The "four walls of schools may not work anymore," she says.

One of the Oakland School Volunteers efforts linked college students enrolled in an urban affairs course with individual students at the project schools. Not too much older than the students they tutored, remembering their own experiences in these middle grade years, they are appalled, angry, confused, and eventually hopeful about many of those whom they tutored. They understand how far the students need to go if they are to make it. But like the Clark project itself, the tutors believe in their students as the following testimonials show:

• "Overall, I enjoyed working with the students, even on the days they tried my nerves. I am sorry to say that one student, Robert, is now in jail; Paco is in correctional school; Andrea was beaten up by someone's parents; and Tony is dead." *[Names were changed.]*

• "A lot of the students seemed curious about how I made it into college, especially coming from a similar background. Obviously, the students naturally assumed that I must be a genius. It is only when I open my mouth that they soon find out that their assumption is far from the truth!"

• "As I sat through the class, I noticed that the work was extremely tedious. I understood why some of the students were restless, as I was also becoming restless."

• "Frequently [the teacher] would read homework paragraphs aloud. The class insisted that she read them anonymously; even in the case of good papers, the owners were unwilling to acknowledge their work as well done."

• "There has been some progress made with all of the boys. I am unsure of the total impact it will have on their lives, but I can see that they are more enthusiastic about trying harder and starting on their work as soon as they get into the classroom. Matthew *[not his real name]* has begun to open up more, and is excited about the work he does. I have noticed that his paragraphs have grown from three lines to an occasional page and one half. He still, however, uses only one or two punctuation marks; but he is writing a lot more."

Students in more than half the classes at West Baltimore have a good understanding of cooperative learning.

HOW ARE THEY DOING SO FAR?

By June 1991, the 12 Clark schools were not the same places they had been two years ago. Most obviously, the schools were under different leadership. Only one principal who had worked on the initial proposal for the Clark initiative – Sheila Kolman at West Baltimore – was still in place. There were three new superintendents, and large staff turnovers had taken place in most of the schools. But a core of at least a few teachers in each school was inspired to try new ideas because of the resources available through the Clark initiative. New programs in place in every school focused on at least one, and sometimes all, of the three highs of the project.

What does the picture look like after two years of attempting fundamental change?

BALTIMORE

Despite lukewarm leadership during the first year at **Calverton** – and troubles in the central office – teachers found ideas they wanted to try. Several spent the first summer writing a character education curriculum, incorporating it into the advisory period. A STAR program set up contracts for incoming sixth graders who needed extra help. Head counselor Raymond Parker opened up communication with neighborhood churches, business groups, and local residents. He brought community members into the school by sponsoring a recognition ceremony for military veterans; this has become an annual affair.

When Frances Ellington took over as principal at the beginning of the second year, she found these "pockets" of people trying new ideas but no overall commitment to change. By bringing more teachers into the process and passing around opportunities for staff development, she is widening the support for reform. The teachers' union was dubious about the advisory period, but negotiations saved it from being eliminated. Teachers also began to accept more help from Johns Hopkins University on cooperative learning and the special reading and writing curricula being used with it.

Ellington now believes Calverton is moving ahead. Students are more engaged, she says. Patrick Reed sees this in his new algebra program. He realized that without some background in algebra, Calverton students were being turned down by the better high schools in Baltimore. If students come to class, they can do the work, he says. "There are a lot of very good children here," he insists. "I hope we can keep them that way."

West Baltimore's focus on using Clark resources to promote schoolwide cooperative learning is showing results. More than half the staff now has a good understanding of cooperative learning, says principal

Sheila Kolman. In a science classroom, the team names convey success – Radical Achievers, Sharpshooters, Brain Busters, Intelligent Hoodlums, Wise Crew. In a language arts class, students acknowledge the racial mix of the school (about 20 percent are white), giving their teams such names as Day and Night and Cookies and Cream. Working-together themes run throughout the many-winged building. Regina Valentine, a reading teacher for 23 years, believes cooperative learning has enlivened her teaching; she uses the Student Team Reading program, an enriched-content approach developed for cooperative learning teams by researchers at Johns Hopkins. "Kids love it," she says. "They get angry at those who don't hold up their end of the bargain. I've never seen students so enthusiastic about reading." Eighth-grader Diaya Scott agrees, saying she likes cooperative learning because, "If you don't know an answer, it is easier to ask kids in the class and work with them. They are your teachers."

Clark project funds also compensate teachers who take on efforts related to the three highs – stipends for those who write materials for advisory, conduct community outreach, or direct the school's peer tutoring program. The faculty voted to add an eighth period to the day in order to gain a common planning period and an early-morning advisory; it also meant their class size shot up to almost 40 students. "We're buying into the program," says Yvonne Smith, staff development coordinator, "but we're frustrated at the numbers." Teachers do not like to be in a trial-and-error situation, she points out, but as teachers recognize the benefits to students through the new strategies in classrooms, even the die-hards begin to change.

LOUISVILLE

Iroquois Middle School's early efforts to create a process for change sometimes stumbled. Peer tutoring started but then stopped; some teachers were negative about cooperative learning; high content was a difficult concept for teachers to grasp. However, staff put more effort into the Catch-Up Crew, started several years ago as a promo-

Skip Clemons, principal at Louisville's Southern, believes his school "is now ready to take risks."

tion opportunity for overage students. Iroquois also forged ahead on computer-assisted instruction. More than 350 students, almost one-half of the enrollment, work in the computer laboratory daily on computer

basics or reinforcement of content. The school also tried cooperative learning, developing a cadre of teachers skilled enough to teach others. The district's Gheens Academy provided training; project funds covered the costs of substitute teachers. In an eighth-grade math class, for example, all students enthusiastically teamed up to play charades with math terms, acting out perpendicular, axis, segment, and pyramid. "We started working in teams last year when we didn't have enough materials for every student," says the teacher Patricia Seng, who has since transferred to another school. "Then, I took training in cooperative learning and realized that's what we had been doing without knowing it." Her classes were then organized in groups most of the time.

The Foxfire project also encouraged teachers in other subject areas to try cooperative learning. Erin Gaebler and Chapter I teacher Robin Brown pair up for science teaching, then divide the class into teams – sometimes by colors of clothes, by who has on blue jeans, by ability levels when the teachers want to mix or separate abilities. She and Brown urge the students to "use

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encouraging words in your group." They give "thumbs up" to all groups at the end of the class. "The students get information better in groups and are motivated to learn the material," says Gaebler. "If I get up and just talk to them, they tune me out right away. I feel sorry for kids who are in classes where cooperative learning is never used."

Teaming requires more effort than most Iroquois teachers anticipated. They talk about working out personality problems and the delicate task of persuading teachers accustomed to working alone to agree on goals. But the school is committed to more innovation with Chapter I and special education. These teachers are now part of regular teaching teams, and programs which pull students out of regular classrooms have been eliminated.

Learning to work together will serve Iroquois' staff well as it becomes one of the sites for a Youth Services Center. These are state-funded programs that provide a range of student and family services at school buildings. Iroquois' attendance is up slightly; students who were academically behind have made substantial progress through the computer-assisted instruction. The goal ahead is to bring everyone on board – to create schoolwide commitment to innovation, to high content, to insisting that all students can master it.

The staff at **Southern Middle School** "is now ready to take risks," says principal Skip Clemons, Jr. He sees his task as one of pulling the various efforts together into a comprehensive focus, providing follow-up support for teachers attempting change. The process at Southern, he says, needs more structured time for teachers to plan and be reflective. He wants support groups to form around subject areas, using an on-site consultant from the University of Louisville. This will minimize staff development that requires substitutes.

Being part of a change process, Clemons says, allowed his teachers to see that their students could become engaged in learning. Teachers of the HOTS program, for example, reported that students were flunking tests "in order to stay in the class." Southern's highly successful Foxfire Project helps students learn "people skills" as well as academic ones. Job shadowing and visits to area vocational schools give eighth graders new perceptions and work opportunities in the city. Students are learning to break a cycle of low expectations created by intergenerational illiteracy and low-income jobs.

Southern's EXCEL program uses special support and contracts to help students who have been retained make up grade levels. In its first year, 45 students were promoted to the next grade. Another program, the Extended School Year, is offered in all three Louisville schools to students failing classes at the end of the school year. In the summer of 1990 an extra two weeks of intensive work enabled 65 of the 85 Southern stu-

dents who were being retained to pass to the next grade. Eighth-grade retentions have been cut in half since 1986-87. Southern's teaching teams meet three days a week after school to help borderline students. A summer camp, LEAD, for incoming sixth graders identified as potentially at risk, is creating greater student self-esteem and better communication among the school's teachers, students, and parents. All three of the Louisville project schools are part of the LEAD program.

As Southern's families drift further into poverty, the faculty needs all the ideas it can garner to keep students in school. Despite changes made in the curriculum and support services, attendance is not improving. However, the group learning so evident in the Foxfire Project motivated teachers to expand their interest and training in cooperative learning.

Southern's 50-year-old, semi-gothic building has been repainted. Administrative changes made by the district are expected to help bring about the cohesion that Clemons feels is necessary. His fondest hopes for Southern is that it will become a place "where kids want to come and parents want to send them."

Ron Barber wants **Western Middle School** to become a professional development site, a place where good teachers will want to come in order to become better. Plans are underway for math teachers to become resources for other schools on the Algebra Project. Peer tutoring, HOTS, the Foxfire Project, Great Books – teachers are exploring every resource they believe will increase their own skills and raise the aspirations of their students. Teachers now rotate responsibility for writing monthly reports on the Clark project, spreading the involvement around. A new organizational structure provides an administrator for each grade level. Western is to have a Youth Services Center and has the services of a school social worker because it is now also part of a network sponsored by the national program, Cities-in-Schools. These changes, and the school's commitment, Barber hopes, might stem the flow of good teachers out of poverty-stricken Western. As the third year of the Clark project began, Barber's skills were to be shared; he is providing part-time

In Milwaukee, Parkman students run their own peer mediation sessions.

support to the other principals in the Louisville Clark schools.

The Clark project "has taken teachers who were burned out and breathed fire into them," says Chris Corbin, coordinator of the Chapter I program at Western. She sees the staff development focus especially helpful to new teachers. For older ones, the project "opened their eyes, although that hasn't happened overnight – and some teachers never will change," she admits.

MILWAUKEE

As Milwaukee began developing its proposal for the Clark initiative, it heralded the leadership of a new superintendent and the reorganization of the school system to better meet the needs of disadvantaged students. As the second year of the project closed, that superintendent was gone, and a fractious selection process for a new one had just ended. Demands from black leaders embroiled the school system in controversy over a school choice plan, then for an African-American immersion school (one of the Clark schools was briefly on the short list to become a site for the new alternative school).

The Clark initiative faltered in the face of large problems. One school had three principals in three years; the other drifted for two years until the principal was transferred at his own request. Deputy Superintendent Deborah McGriff, responsible for the Clark project, was held in limbo while the school board decided on a new superintendent and finally left to become superintendent in Detroit. The central office's tradition of encouraging school-site leadership to take the initiative worked when the leadership by principals and/or teachers was skillful, did not work when it was weak.

Despite losing a year of momentum because of principal-teacher conflicts, **Kosciuszko Middle School** launched some promising initiatives during the first two years of the Clark project. The staff started an advisory period and felt empowered enough to move it around until they felt comfortable with its place in the schedule. Teachers are learning how to be advisors as well as teachers; about half are using the advisory time well, in the opinion of one of the organizers. Tackling the challenge of high content, the teachers decided to apply to be a schoolwide Chapter I site and, at the same time, to eliminate tracking. Its successful Career Linking program expanded from one teacher and one grade level to a schoolwide, sequential career awareness project for all grades.

Because teachers took up cooperative learning at different times, they decided to establish various levels of staff development, as well as a support group for cooperative learning. Under principal Efrain Vila, participation in decisionmaking broadened in 1990-91. For example, Kozy is a bilingual center, but the bilingual teachers

At Roosevelt in Oakland, every ninth grader now enrolls in algebra or pre-algebra. ESL teacher Janet Horton-Payne assists with a problem.

had been isolated in basement classrooms. They moved upstairs and onto committees and took on new functions that brought them into the life of the total school.

Vila believes his greatest contribution to Kozy's efforts under the Clark project so far has been consensus-building and focus, pulling together the staff's ideas for Chapter I and for the project. Fewer teachers are asking to transfer; more activities for students are planned. A staff that had been defensive and wary of change can now laugh along with Vila when he says candidly that "in middle schools, some days are awful, but some days are great."

Parkman Middle School illustrates the belief that a core of dedicated teachers can move a school. Belle Tomasello assumed the lead on cooperative learning, becoming a sought-after trainer in her school and in the district. Shop teacher Gus Harris took on career awareness, creating a Career Resource Center and opportunities for students to understand the job market. His project to give eighth graders a chance to visit high schools is being adopted at Kosciuszko. Assistant principal Ramelann Kalagian established ways to recognize student achievement – the wall outside of her office is covered with cheerful congratulations.

Parkman plans to amplify the ideas already showing success – cooperative learning, the student leadership program QUEST, career awareness, peer mediation and tutoring, and parent outreach. Teachers plan to venture further. Math teacher Donna Ford

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has developed a curriculum with a strong use of language skills; one math teacher will try the Algebra Project; several teachers will attend training for a Writing to Learn curriculum offered by one of the Clark resources.

The feeling at Parkman as the third year of the project began is that "it's a new day," a theme repeated constantly for students. Exposed to better ways of motivating their very impoverished students, some teachers are beginning to form a consensus that they can make a difference.

OAKLAND

Frick Junior High School organized its 700 students into four "castles" during the 1990-91 school year, inspired by Clark project workshops on high content. Some worked because of the diligence of a few teachers, others did not due to lackluster enthusiasm for the idea. The teams will get stronger, former principal June Jackson predicts, as teachers learn how to work together. Peer counseling, a student advisory, an Early Alert support program for seventh graders particularly at risk – all of these were tried with varying degrees of success.

Because of the Clark project, Frick draws upon support from the Oakland Partners in Education, especially for one-on-one tutoring. Two other groups provide mentors for individual students, and social workers and an intervention counselor help with the most troubled students.

Frick wants to establish a contract system among students, teachers, and parents. Under the contracts, students will come to school and teachers will provide different strategies to enliven and deepen the content. Teachers want to spend more time strengthening interdisciplinary teams and combine the advisory periods with outside support services for more cohesive attention to students' needs.

Lynn Dodd's first priority when she became acting principal at **King Estates Junior High School** in the early spring of 1991 was to gain control of discipline problems so that teachers could teach. She swiftly moved to use the Clark project goals as a unifying element among the faculty, adding shared decisionmaking, block scheduling, the possibility of interdisciplinary teams, and an advisory period for students.

Dodd believes the staff has now bought into the concept of a higher-content curriculum. There are plans to group students into houses and to move to a middle-school organization of grades six through eight by 1992. New teachers who support the project goals will be recruited and will be paired with a "buddy" veteran teacher. More support services for students are planned, as well as greater contact with parents.

Despite strong initial resistance, teachers at **Roosevelt Junior High School** began to entertain some changes. They made plans to move to a house structure to create more

personal environments for students. They also want to add a career awareness component to the curriculum. Efforts were continued to de-track the curriculum, and every ninth grader now enrolls in either algebra or pre-algebra. Teachers developed some interdisciplinary monthly themes, and the school experimented with an ethnic studies course for eighth graders.

Teachers say the Clark project resources are helping them understand the objectives of higher standards, but they still are not sure how to achieve them with their very diverse student body. Clementina Duron, who left the school's principalship at the end of the 1990-91 school year, credits the Clark project with moving staff development to the center of the school's focus. "It was a way for us to become uncomfortable," she says.

SAN DIEGO

If teachers at **Mann Middle School** "can hold out against the onslaught of new students," principal Julie Elliott says, they will start on their goal to become a professional practices school. They could demonstrate for others how to develop a strong multi-perspective, child-centered school. Budget cuts and an additional 300 students per year have put some of their plans on hold and created severe space problems at the school, but Mann's teachers are getting ready anyway.

The Clark project sparked innovation at Mann. Its HOTS labs are considered exemplary by the developer, Stan Pogrow at the University of Arizona. Teachers are using Socratic seminars to help students develop critical thinking skills. Two industrial arts teachers, energized by the freedom to come up with new ideas, converted their classrooms to an Exploring Technology Program. With outside funding, they constructed and equipped the rooms for applied science, robotics, laser technology, computers, and engineering.

Through the parent collaboration effort of the June Burnett Institute, a parent coordinator will be on hand to help new parents and current ones who do not speak English. The school also draws parents in through night classes ranging from art to computers, where students often take courses with their parents. Counselors from San Diego State University now offer free family counseling at night at the school. Mann also hosted a summer institute on developing high-content curricula.

Muirlands Middle School made a successful transition to grades six through eight, organizationally and philosophically. Using the Middle Grades Assessment Program, it instituted a logical process for the change – and continued it through school-site management and greater attention to the needs of parents residing in the Logan Barrio. From a school wrapped up in high-content attention for its gifted students,

Muirlands English teacher Anita Graham reflects the school's belief that all students can be at grade level when they graduate.

Muirlands is moving out to a broader perspective, assuming responsibility for creating academic success by the one-third of its students coming from the barrio.

It is recognizing the importance of student involvement. Instructionally, this means cooperative learning and more project-oriented teaching. The school has started a program of electives, from marine biology to a pep squad. For additional support to the barrio students, it now has an Hispanic Leadership Club and the Young Blacks Association. All subject-matter teachers plan greater emphasis upon writing, and a new career awareness program will link studies to professional careers. Muirlands teachers were leaders in summer workshops on high-content curriculum and with teachers from Mann are planning a city-wide seminar for middle school teachers, based largely on the objectives of the Clark project.

Allen Peck transferred to the principalship of a high school at the end of the 1990-91 school year. When he left Muirlands, he admitted one could still walk into some classrooms and not see the mix of neighborhood and barrio students that he had wanted. But he also believes the Muirlands faculty has a new vision – "to work intensively with students, starting in the sixth grade, so *all* will be at grade level when they graduate."

espite the problems,

these schools have made a difference for their students;

they certainly provide lessons for others. . .

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Explorers ordinarily know their maps by heart. The 12 urban middle-grades schools in the Clark project ventured into the unknown without any map and overloaded with baggage from trips past – structures, teaching styles, and knowledge of content meant for a different time and a different student population. The schools had a destination, but none had been there before. After two years of work, the maps they are drawing show some deadends, crossbacks, and long stops; but they also show paths through territory that

CHANGING AND LEADING

requires new skills and attitudes to cross.

The trip is not comfortable for many of those involved in the project, and not everyone is on board. Also one can legitimately question how far the schools can ultimately go, considering the extremely destructive environments around almost all of them. Yet as one Louisville principal asked, how many students would have slipped through if the schools were not trying to learn how to give young adolescents better chances?

These schools substantially confirm the research literature around one commonsense notion. Every school's efforts to bring about fundamental change is unique. As much as they are alike in the students they serve and the resources they have, none duplicates any other's experiences. However, the initiative reveals what can happen in a few months time. It also provides some lessons about change in urban middle schools.

WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED

• In a dozen schools overwhelmed by failure inside and in the structures outside, teachers and administrators began to develop a much better set of options for young adolescents. Many of them questioned embedded beliefs that students must be shaped to fit the school and became, instead, more child-centered. The degree of change ranged widely – from "feeling uncomfortable" with the status quo to being rewarded by student turnarounds in attendance, engagement, and academic achievement.

• Many students responded positively to the higher expectations, content, and support generated by the initiative. Although the efforts tended to be in small pieces – driven by a few teachers or carried out with uneven quality – there was enough present in most schools to convince teachers and students that more change would be worthwhile. Give students high content, and they love it.

• To varying degrees, the central offices in the five school districts developed new habits of working with schools. Some did so only after critical scrutiny by the project's directors and/or evaluators, but their relationships with the Clark schools began to offer more support and less pro forma regulation. In each district, vertical organizations – with schools represented on central office committees for the project – offered feedback and opportunities to work through problems together. Perhaps there were some frustrations with "meetingitis," but central office and school-site people did sit down and talk together about specific objectives.

• Some schools in the initiative gained enough confidence with their efforts to offer leadership to other middle schools. Teachers in these schools want to share what they are learning about such strategies as de-tracking, high content, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary teaming and curriculum units, and student advisories.

They are participating in district-wide workshops, even making plans to become professional development schools.

• Leadership within the schools received encouragement. The project reduced the loneliness of risk takers. This initiative underscores the value of developing networks among teachers, principals, and administra-

tors to provide much-needed support. It may be a workshop discussion on high content shared by teachers from different schools, or an understanding among principals that they can call each other at the end of a dreadful day and unload their frustrations. Just having fresh ideas or compatible contacts is motivating for those who have been isolated too long in demoralizing situations.

• The faculty in most schools came together to work on a common vision. Even a task as basic as trying to define the three "highs" – expectations, content, and support – brought cohesion into discussions about "what do we do now?" With only one or two exceptions, the schools experienced less isolation among teachers and more meaningful involvement with each other over specific objectives.

• Teachers and administrators in several schools altered their assumption that parents of urban middle-school students do not want to be involved with the schools. They discovered that parents had never been asked in the right ways. Likewise, parents in some districts learned to be less intimidated by schools, more pushy in advocating for their children.

• Individual schools, school districts, and community resources learned more about how to work together. Not all partnerships were immediately successful. The problem was often articulation – teachers and administrators could not define what they needed, community resources could not see how they fit in. However, where people have the patience to work problems out, students and schools are benefitting from additional resources. These new partnerships will be particularly helpful in the future because they lay the groundwork for the inevitable. Schools and community agencies will have to become close allies if students' and families' needs in urban neighborhoods are to be addressed humanely and effectively.

WHAT WAS LEARNED

• Despite constant media and public attention to the plight of young urban adolescents, their situation has been underestimated. These are desperate young people, consumed by failure all around them – failure of families, of neighborhoods, of institutions. They need the people in schools – the most stable group of adults they know – to help them and their families survive. Urban middle schools, similarly, are on the brink themselves, pulled down by overwhelming problems among their students and insufficient leadership, talent, and resources to change – unless they receive massive help.

• Urban middle schools are accustomed to "an unexamined life." Their failure is of such long standing that repetitions of it in test scores or other measures of success rarely bring about pressure for fundamental change. Perhaps central offices assume that because such schools have problems in at-

tracting and retaining good teachers, they cannot expect to do more. Perhaps habitually low expectations – of students and of such schools – permeate policymaking. Perhaps structures within schools discourage concerned individuals from speaking up. For whatever reason, these schools were unfamiliar with analyzing data and acting upon it. Teachers and administrators apparently do not come together often to deal with obvious failure. Likewise, they have little experience in working together cohesively on more enlightened visions for their students. Their view of accomplishments is often superficial – perhaps because of bureaucratic modes of communication (they chew up words and meaning beyond recognition), perhaps because of the lack of time to be more reflective.

• Urban middle schools were more timid and limited than was anticipated in their opinions of how much they can change. Undoubtedly, the constant turnover of teachers, students, and administrators in these schools undermines efforts to be different and obtain different results. This issue – voluntary and involuntary instability around urban middle schools – does not seem to be on any agenda for policymaking. There *are* actions which could be taken to give these schools a better chance, such as requiring teachers who obtain higher professional skills because of programs at these schools to remain for a certain period. Or investing in potential leadership and selecting it better. Or providing transportation to the original schools for students who transfer within the district during the year. Other issues inhibiting change at these schools are the inability to select faculty committed to a middle-school philosophy, the mismatch between traditionally trained teachers and the characteristics of today's inner-city student, and the lack of recognition and rewards that would encourage change efforts.

• Urban middle schools cannot "go it alone," ignoring instability or lack of direction at the central-office level. These ripple down to the classroom, affecting everyone's commitment. It is very telling that the two districts of the five in the Clark project which enjoy greater stability in leadership at the top were also the two which encountered the fewest barriers to change. In the others, the lack of trust among various parties created tension and stances that inhibited change, such as union objections to extra periods for advisories or unproductive blame-letting.

• Urban middle schools need much more creative modes of staff development. The knowledge base about young adolescents, how they learn best, and what they should be learning has never been richer; teachers and administrators in these schools need access to that knowledge. However, expecting them to be able to absorb new learning themselves at the end of even a normal school day is unrealistic. And unlike training in typical business structures, it is

impractical to offer these learning opportunities away from the school because the use of substitutes interrupts what teachers are trying to do for their students. No one can really cover for them. Professional practice schools – where teachers come for a longer period of time and where more stable substitute arrangements are made – could be an answer. So might teacher-designed centers within schools, staffed by experts able to help teachers with particular problems, as well as to give larger contexts to their day-to-day concerns.

• Visualizing and implementing high content is the most difficult challenge for urban middle school teachers. It is an issue that should become central to the education of and certification of teachers for middle schools. How can teachers for these schools be child-centered and, at the same time, have the intellectual depth in subject matter to provide high-content teaching? The dilemma also affects the ethos of urban middle schools. In order to understand high content and use it continually, teachers need to be constant learners themselves – within their classrooms with their students and within schools with their colleagues.

• Leadership exists in every school to create much better outcomes for students. But teachers and principals move on. The commitment to a vision and ideas to help students should belong to a school, not an individual. This requires institutional support for change, a climate that honors good efforts systemically instead of episodically. The same is true for districts. Resources and policymaking must value and encourage the spread of ideas and programs resulting in better changes for young people. Otherwise the ideas will wither when people exhaust themselves and/or their temporary resources.

• Getting past the first steps in the change process takes much longer than expected. It would save time if schools followed a model, such as assessment, planning, capacity building, implementation, and evaluation. But it rarely happens that way. Schools have to discover their own entry point, find their leaders, and separate real from superficial barriers before they can develop a consensus.

The 12 schools in the Clark initiative are working through these realities. How well they cope will greatly depend on the stability and leadership provided by the five districts. Ultimately, however, a better future for these special students depends upon the will to change – by each school and within each teacher.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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